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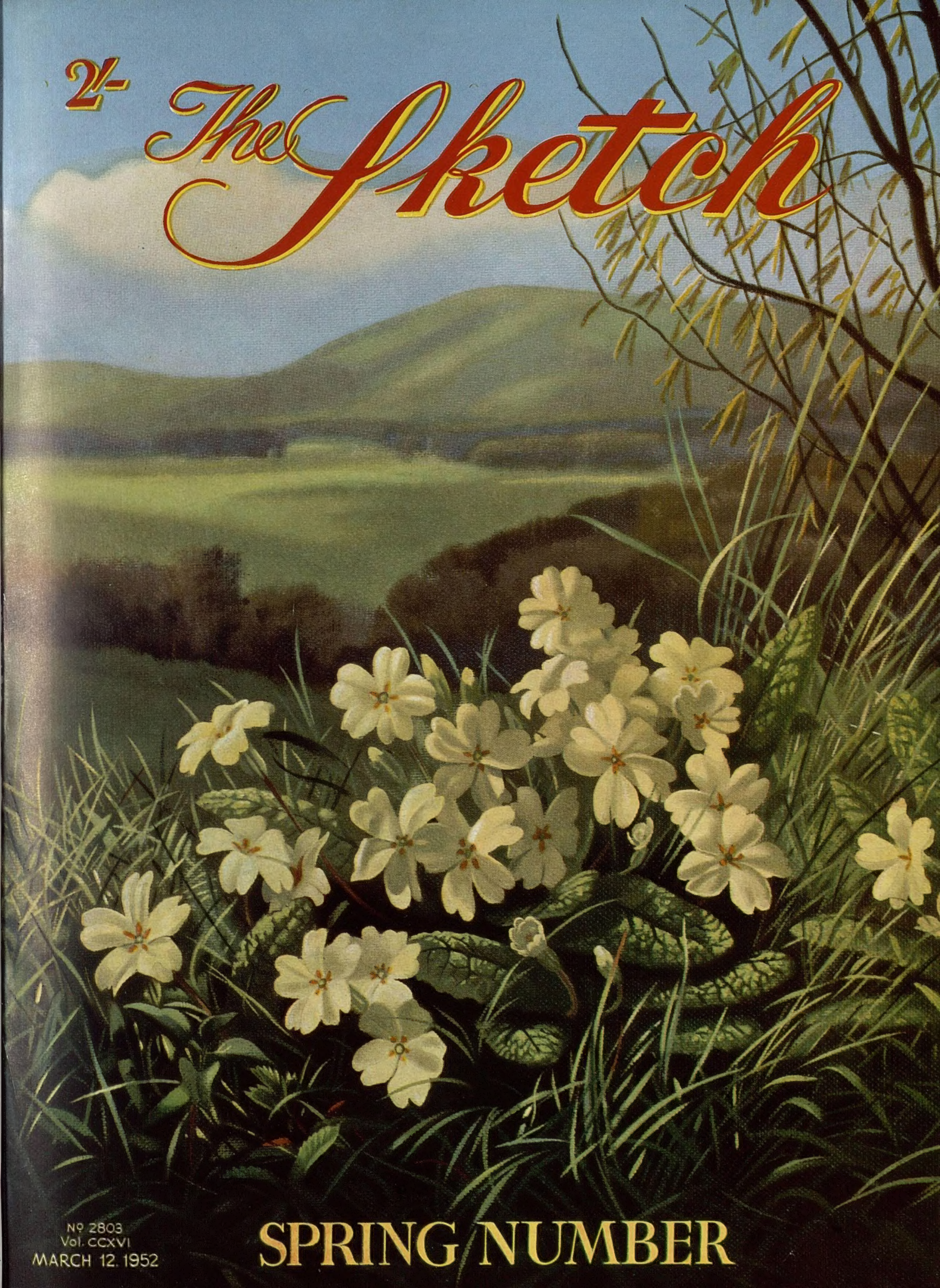
The Sketch



Nº 2803
Vol. CCXVI
MARCH 12. 1952

SPRING NUMBER

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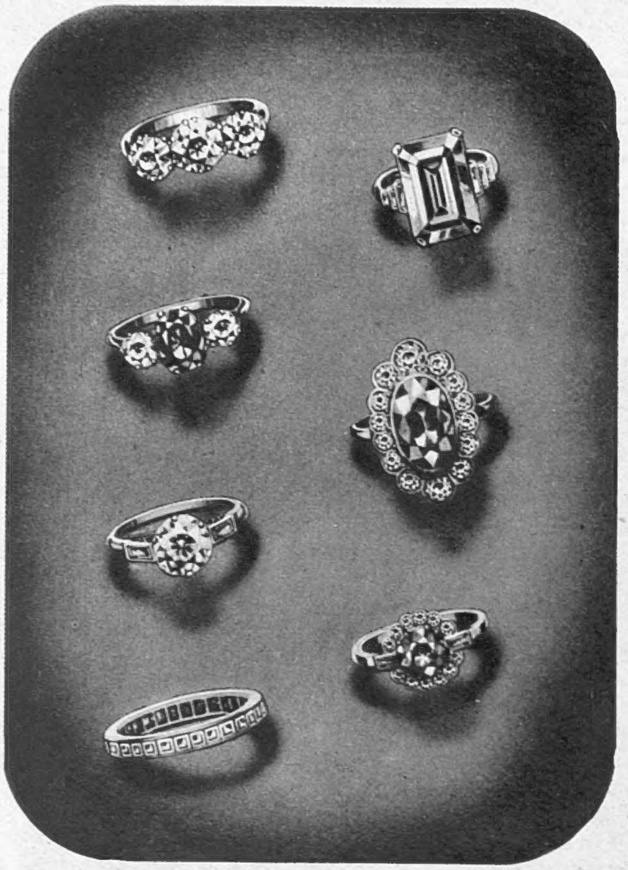

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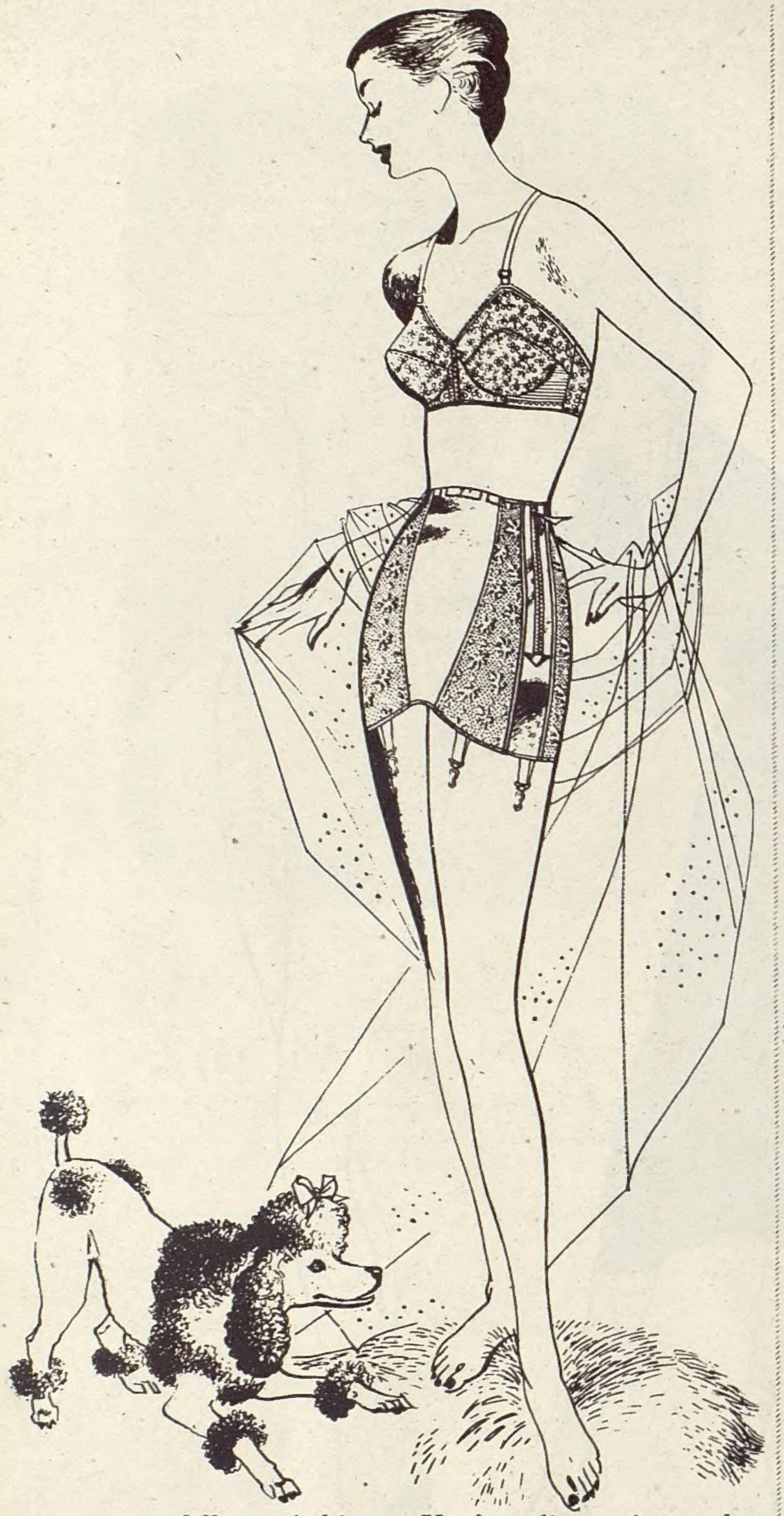

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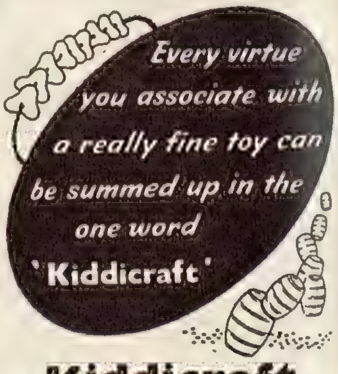

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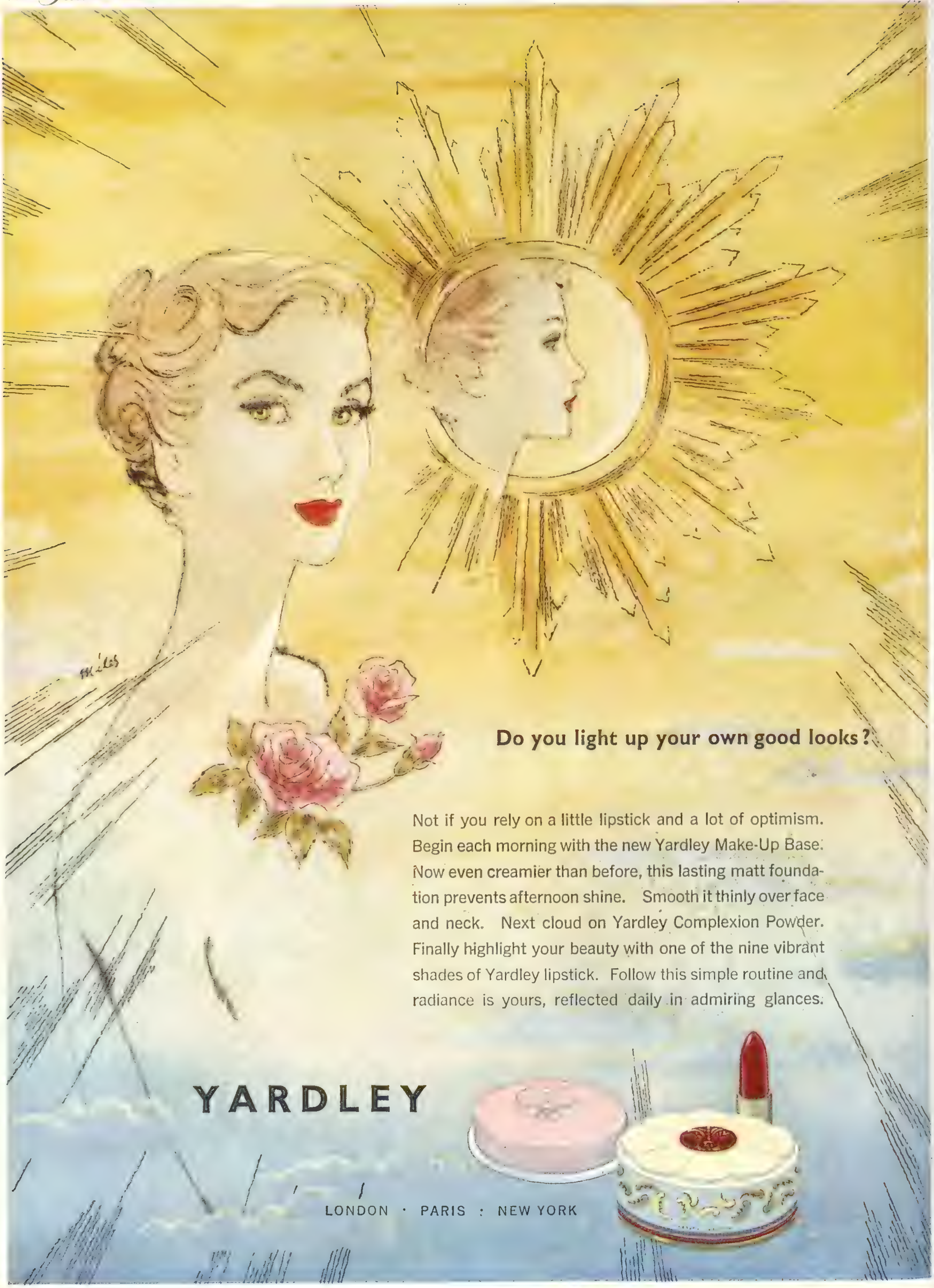

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The Sketch

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 1952

Photographed by E. Heimann.

INTRODUCTION TO SPRING

SPRING GARDEN . . . and with the daffodils well in evidence, this scene at least is all set to herald the season. Our special photographer, Harold White, found it among the fifteen gardens at the *Daily Mail* Ideal Home Exhibition at Olympia, which opened last week and remains open until March 29.

Our Motley Notes

BY TOBY O'BRIEN

ONE of the sillier jokes, but one which has always pleased me, was that which appeared in one of the illustrated comic papers before the war. It showed an elderly rustic with a hand to his ear, and the local parson saying to him : " Touch of Spring in the air to-day, Mr. Hoskins." To which " Gaffer " replied : " Eh ? " The parson repeated louder : " I was saying that there is a touch of Spring in the air to-day, Mr. Hoskins." " Spring in the air ! Why should I, eh—why should I ? "

In spite of the fact that by the time you read this we shall have had the Budget, and the Budget will have had us, I always feel that—notwithstanding all experience to the contrary—once one is into March there is, indeed, a touch of Spring in the air. The light acquires a curious luminosity, smells and sights and sounds are sharpened, and dark clothes which have passed perfectly well in the winter are revealed as having a slight shine on them. The weeping willows by the Serpentine Bridge, which are almost the first trees in London to put out fresh foliage, are giving a hint of what is to come, and the buds of that second chestnut-tree on the right as you look north across the Serpentine Bridge, which is always, for some curious reason, the first to appear and the first to shed its leaves, are showing distinct signs of bursting.

TALKING of Spring, " Beachcomber's " recent reference to the centenary of the " Café Sorg " in Strasbourg reminded me of one of the most poignant incidents of my youth. " Café Sorg," or, as I knew it, the " Café Valentin " or

"Valentin-Sorg," is, I suppose, one of the finest eating-places in the world. The year was 1931, and I was deeply in love with the charming young lady who could wrinkle her nose—that terrible "junge Liebe" of which Humbert Woolfe wrote:

It is light as a leaf
As strong as steel,
There is no grief
So striped to feel.

The young lady had been with her mother to Freiburg-im-Breisgau. I had returned to London earlier. In the train from Freiburg to Strasbourg I asked the only other occupant of my carriage if he could recommend a good restaurant. He said that when he had been a student, the Café Valentin was undoubtedly the place, but he did not know if it still existed. I found it, had a magnificent dinner, and inspired by an equally magnificent bottle of Rhine wine, called for writing materials. I poured out my soul in page after page of passionate, eloquent but, I trust, elegant Oxonian devotion. I gave it to the waiter, with a large tip, to make sure that it was posted. I returned to London sure that the heart of a statue would be moved, or a basilisk tamed, by such a letter. I received no reply. Some weeks later we met. The meeting was constrained. Finally, the young lady said: "Why didn't you write?" I shall never forget that moment. I fear that my distress at the fact that the young lady's heart had not been engaged was more than outweighed by my regret that so admirable a letter would not be found among my posthumous papers for the use of my biographer. Since then I have always been tempted, like Horace Walpole, to keep a copy.

A LITTLE while ago I attended the dinner at the Coningsby Club, at which Mr. Colin Coote, the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, was the guest of honour. The Coningsby is restricted to Conservative graduates of the two older universities, and meets at the Junior Carlton Club, and dines round "Dizzy's" circular Cabinet table. (Incidentally, when did the present long, rectangular table in the Cabinet Room come into use?) Colin Coote delivered himself of an excellent little piece, but as the proceedings of the Coningsby are private, I can reveal nothing of it. I did have occasion, however, to reveal to my fellow-members that Colin has the remarkable record of having been elected a Member of Parliament, not only *in absentia*, but without his knowledge. In World War I., when he was serving as a subaltern on the Italian front, the Isle of Thanet (or some such constituency) became vacant. His father was offered the seat, refused it, but said that he had a son serving somewhere on the battle-front who might be interested. He was duly adopted, and elected unopposed. The first intimation he had of his new dignity as a legislator was when a staff officer told him that he had become an M.P., to which Colin replied that it was unfair to make game of a poor infantry subaltern, and that he would only believe him if he could have a fortnight's leave straight away. When this was granted to him, he really came to the view that there must be something in it.

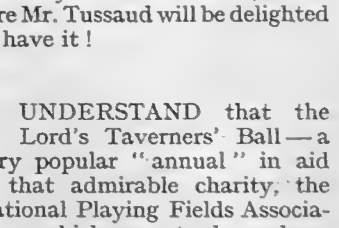
In retaliation, Colin Coote quoted the story of the man who received a telegram asking if he would stand for Parliament, to which he replied: "Yes. Which party?" Candidates who have made the round of the selection committees will sigh for those halcyon days!

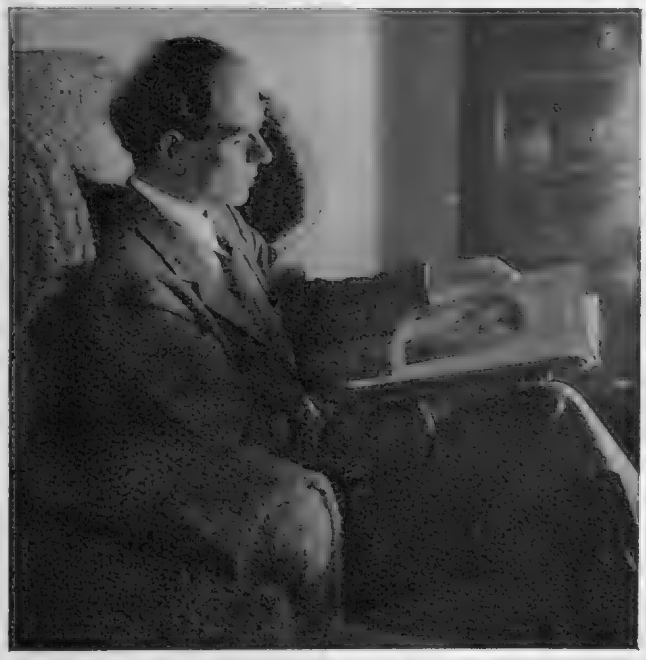
TWO nights later I attended another club dinner—that of the "1900 Club"—to those members of the Club who have become Members of the Government. The "1900 Club" is a curiously British institution. That is to say, it is so called because it has many fewer than 1900 members and was founded in 1906—to keep together those who had survived the Liberal landslide of 1906, who sat in the 1900 Parliament. It has now no premises, and as a result subscriptions pile up so that, from time to time, on the principle that charity begins at home, it stands itself a dinner on purely nominal terms. The dinner the other night was one of the best, both from the point of view of the food and the wine, there has been since the war. There were only two official speeches, that of Sir Charles Petrie, the historian, who is chairman, and that of Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, the Home Secretary. Again, it is not possible to give any indication of what Sir David said. Suffice it that when he sat down the applause grew to cheers, and the cheers to spontaneous uprising of the whole company and their singing of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." In the same spontaneous manner Sir Charles Petrie, who has done so much for this Club and for the other half-dozen clubs of which he is chairman, was honoured, but on this all-male occasion the name of his wife, an indefatigable L.C.C. Councillor and a delightful person, was coupled with it. A unique tribute, I think.

A WEEK or two before the dinner, Sir David was telling me what a fascinating experience it was to be measured for inclusion in Madame Tussaud's new group of the leading members of Mr. Churchill's Cabinet. Mr. Bernard Tussaud, the fifth of his line, himself comes with calipers and takes a vast number of measurements, some of a most unexpected nature. Mr. Edds, who has been with the firm almost as long as Mr. Tussaud himself, takes at least forty photographs from every possible angle.

My interest having been aroused by this, I went round to see Mr. Tussaud and (I must confess that, like many Londoners, I had never been to the famous waxworks) to see how it was done. I was shown Mr. Oliver Lyttelton's undraped figure, his head being modelled in wax from the photographs, and Mr. Peter Thorneycroft acquiring a head of hair. This latter process is, to my mind, the most fascinating of the lot. Each hair is applied individually to the cranium, eyebrows and upper lip (I gather that the hair comes from the shearings of those who go into monasteries or nunneries in France and Italy). The result is in many cases incredibly realistic—in some cases less so. Thus of the present Cabinet group, Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe and Lord Swinton are excellent, and looking at "Rab" Butler you half-expect him to announce yet another cut. Lord Woolton is passable, Mr. Churchill recognisable, but the Anthony Eden (which they hope to replace when the Foreign Secretary can give them a sitting) is a caricature of the auburn-haired young man he was when he first shone in public life. Incidentally, in the Hall of the Kings of England, the figures of King Edward VII. and King George V. look a little odd without their orders and decorations. These and other souvenirs to the tune of £20,000-worth were annexed by G.I.s during the war, and are now almost irreplaceable. If any of you have an Order of the Garter you do not want, I am sure Mr. Tussaud will be delighted to have it!

I UNDERSTAND that the Lord's Taverners' Ball—a very popular "annual" in aid of that admirable charity, the National Playing Fields Association—which was to have been held on April 28, has been put off till July owing to the death of the King. I hope this will in no way deter those who had already decided to take tickets.





OUR COVER ARTIST

Mr. Cedric Chater, whose painting of primroses forms the cover of this Spring Number, lives at Eastbourne, where he attended the Eastbourne College of Art. His work has been shown in various exhibitions, including the Royal Academy and the Animal Painters Society's show at the Cooling Galleries; four of his paintings are among the work of Sussex painters on exhibition at Brighton.

Spring Engagements

MISS SARAH-JANE SLADE is to marry the Hon. Robin Cayzer, eldest son of Lord Rotherwick. She is the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Slade of Castle Hill House, Nether Stowey, Somerset, and a niece of Sir Alfred Slade. Her father, who was in the Somerset Light Infantry, has ridden many winners in point-to-points; her mother was Miss Angela Chichester. Both families are well known in the West Country. Miss Slade has been working in London as a model; is to be married in her grandmother's wedding dress.

THE HON. MIRIAM FITZ-ALAN-HOWARD is engaged to Lt. T. B. P. Hubbard, R.N. She is a daughter of Lord Howard of Glossop and Baroness Beaumont, a peeress in her own right. Mr. Hubbard is the eldest son of the late Mr. Theodore Hubbard and Mrs. Hubbard; Miss Fitz-alan-Howard has three sisters and four brothers.

THE HON. GWENLLIAN JAMES and Mr. M. H. Rose announced their engagement on February 25. She is the eldest daughter of Lord and Lady Northbourne, of Northbourne Court, Deal, and is half American: her mother was Miss Katherine Nickerson of Boston. Mr. Rose is a son of the Bishop of Dover and Mrs. Rose.

MISS DIANA EDWARDS, whose fiancé, Captain H. A. Stacy-Marks, is the only son of Cdr. N. J. and Mrs. Stacy-Marks, of Mtwapa, Kenya. He is in the Royal Engineers; his father is on the R.N.R.; Miss Edwards is the elder daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Edwards, of Cheyne Cottage, Gordon Avenue, Stanmore.

THE HON. ANN DENISON-PENDER is the daughter of Lord and Lady Pender, and has a job at the Foreign Office; she is engaged to Mr. R. J. Dent, son of Capt. John Dent, R.N. She was a bridesmaid at the wedding of the Hon. Mrs. Edmund Ironside, and is to be seen with her in a photograph in Our Social Diary.

MISS PENELOPE JAMIESON, younger daughter of Sir Archibald and the late Lady Jamieson, has announced her engagement to Mr. Hugo Munro Fraser of Les Augres Manor, Jersey; she has been staying over there lately. Her father, who won an M.C. in the 1914-18 war, lives in Smith Square, Westminster; has an elder daughter and two sons.

Photographed by A. H. Brackensey.

CONCENTRATION

I AM an ex-Londoner. I live surrounded by trees and fields, and I can see the edge of an horizon where the Cotswolds begin. So you might not believe me if I say that I seldom get that old, keen, sudden intimation of a new Spring which I used to enjoy between Hampstead and Fleet Street. Seasons are sharper in the cities. You know when it is hot; you know when it is damnably cold; you know, or you notice, when particular trees, particular cherries, particular lilacs, suddenly become alive. You pass them every day against their dead backcloth of houses. Also I am a bit envious because Londoners get their Spring before we do, owing to the shelter of the streets. I come up from, and through, fields which are still soggy and wintry, feet cold in a cold train, and I find Londoners looking cheerful and London speckled with delicious green and delicious bloom.

In London days I used to mark the advance of a new Spring by two special trees between home and the Tube. It was always night when I saw them, but they were illuminated by a street lamp which stood up between the two, a Hampstead lime and a Hampstead hawthorn. Night by night I could measure their illuminated progress. First Spring, first leaf, and so to full Spring and full leafage. In the mornings I went another way, past a lilac—a white lilac which grew more or less inside a dark divided cypress, in front of a Regency villa. Spring was really in being when two things happened at once: when the lilac was snow against the dark and when I walked into a wind off the Heath which was gentle for the first time, instead of cold and inquisitive.

Outside the cities—let 's admit—Spring is more often a process of two steps forward and a step back. It is not so much a happening, though a day does come when you realise it is all there. This winter someone wrote to the papers to say that his pear-tree had been in full blossom on Christmas Day. I believe that for the last five Christmases I have had some roses, violets and primroses fully out in the garden. Very promising. I think about Spring. I think winter is half over before it has begun. Lately I have read a journal in which John Clare, the poet, recorded the coming of a Midland Spring more than a century ago. On Christmas Day, 1824, he found a dog-rose and a woodbine in leaf, daisies out, and primroses. On January 5, 1825, the polyanthuses were gay in his cottage border. On January 11 thrushes were singing. January 19: "A slight storm of snow for the first time this winter." January 31: "Spring seems begun." That was asking for trouble. February 4: "The first winter's day, a sharp frost, and a night full of snow, drifted in heaps by a keen wind."

Sometimes I wish our seasons were divided more dramatically, and decisively. One day a Siberian or Canadian death, frost, snow, an eternity of white. The day after, thaw, and the sight—how miraculously!—of the first patch of genuine earth. All the same, no real complaints. Look back through your gallery of Springs, and pick out the best of them, and hope this year is going to be better still. Hesitation, false alarms, snow around flowers which started off too soon, arum leaves up and then blackened by frost. Yes, but then the real thing came, at last, at last and all complete; and so exquisite, so exciting, that nobody else's Spring was to be envied, anywhere in the world.

Not the Londoner's Spring, after all. He gets his Spring incomplete. London can never smell like Spring, only like London; and smell, scent, is one of Spring's best qualities, far too little celebrated. London leaves come out green, and the soot covers them. The sparkle goes out of the new leaf. Crocuses push up, London sparrows peck them to bits. And sparrow-twitter—what a poor substitute for the full noises of full Spring in the full country!

A balloonist once floated from London across Surrey, in May, the sky cloudless, the wind slight, hardly existing. He came to a wood. Fifteen hundred feet up. Almost absolute silence. Then at a stroke he was aware of something else, of a new sound—"surely the most wonderful and sweetest sound heard by mortal ears . . . the combined singing of thousands of birds, of half the kinds which make the English Spring so lovely." By very close attention, he could sometimes pick an individual song out of the harmony. "No doubt at all there were wrens, and chaffinches, and blackbirds and thrushes, hedge-sparrows, warblers, greenfinches and bullfinches, and a score of others, by the hundred; and their singing comes up to me from that ten-acre wood in one sweet volume of heavenly music." We do not go in balloons, but like that lyrical balloonist and poet (who was a retired major), we can hear the same music this Spring and every Spring, pouring in through the window, if only we wake up early enough.

Sound, scent, sparkle, new colour, new movement and life, new gentleness of air. They have the same elements, though there are as many versions of a full English Spring as there are kinds of landscape between the Roman Wall and Surrey, or Surrey and Land's End. Each of us has an ideal image. My own does not happen to emphasize the customary symbols such as wood anemones, or bluebells, or May trees, or primroses, or blackbirds, or cuckoos, though it may include them all. In winter, or the intermittent drag towards Spring, the picture I give myself belongs to the West of England, where the winters themselves are so often only languid Springs. I see a shallow, though not very wide valley in South Cornwall. Grass and sycamore stems glitter after a shower has passed over them. Perhaps an adder shines on a bank; and the new light is reflected also from beetles or from a stream running over stones. Placed above the valley, I can take in all its new colour at a glance. Not only a fresh green, but a faint, fresh red in the new leaves of oak trees. Not only red, but the bubbled-up, bloodless white of blossoms against blackthorn stems. Not only white, but pale yellows of leaf, and pale ochre of sallow catkins. The scent—that is compounded of freshness, earth which is wet but no longer cold, the pollen blowing from the catkins, and the peculiar coolness of the smell of primroses. New movement, new sound are provided by a wave of immigrant warblers willow-wrens and chiffchaffs, lately arrived over the Channel. Small songs and calls minute birds weaving and flicking in and out of the sallow trees. An astonishing blend of the very placid and very exciting and exhilarating and gravid and disturbing.

Each of us may not have bothered about poems since we were desk-high, but I suppose as well that each of us remembers some quotation or other for Spring, even several quotations. Mine include D. H. Lawrence writing of the leaves on elm suckers as a "flutter of green snow" (a good reminder that it is seldom too late for a winter relapse). Another comes out of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Bluebells, repeatedly surprising, however commonplace they are, and English to a particular degree because of our unextreme, damp climate in an island where you can never be more than fifty miles from the coast. Hopkins wrote of bluebells making woods and brakes "*washwet like lakes.*" A third Spring text comes from a much earlier poet whose name is unknown and who wrote in Chaucer's time of those young reddish oak leaves. He says that he went into a grove of oaks early in the morning. They rose above newly-sprung grass. Set straight as a line, they grew 8 or 9 ft. apart—

With braunches brode, laden with leves new
That sprongen out ayein the sonne shene,
Som very rede, and som a glad light grene.

Excellent; but I go to one West Country poet who felt a Spring mode, wrote a poem to May (which is the full Spring in most years), and had to insert cuckoos—

The cuckoo over white-waved seas
Do come to sing in thy green trees.

Old as the hills, but isn't that more than excellent? Spring in a green island with windy seas around. Cuckoos coming in with new life, new sound, to enjoy the new warmth and new growth in Wiltshire, Devonshire and every other county. But I have seen a cuckoo flying through a wall of snow. An April cuckoo, if not a May one.

By "THE SKETCH" special photographer, Harold White, F.I.B.P., F.R.P.S.

OPENING TO-MORROW

Margaret Leighton, Mary Ellis, Ralph Richardson and Anthony Quayle on the river side of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon. The 1952 Shakespeare season starts there to-morrow, March 13, with *Coriolanus*, played by Anthony Quayle, with Mary Ellis (her first appearance in Shakespeare in this country) as Volumnia. *The Tempest* follows on March 25 with Prospero and Ariel played by Ralph Richardson and Margaret Leighton, neither of whom has appeared at the Memorial Theatre before. *As You Like It* takes over on April 29 with Margaret Leighton playing her favourite part, Rosalind. *Macbeth*, produced by John Gielgud, who has also, with Michael Northen, designed the scenery, opens on June 10, Ralph Richardson playing Macbeth, and Margaret Leighton, Lady Macbeth. The last play of the season will be Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, with Ralph Richardson in the name-part, Anthony Quayle as Mosca and George Devine producing. This season Anthony Quayle, who has produced eight plays since he became Director in 1948, is acting only.

Notes and Pictures from Our Social Diary

FEB. 21.—Princess Vladimir Galitzine was At Home to discuss plans for the Balalaika Ball, which is to be at the Dorchester on May 6. She has collected a large committee, not all of whom were at this first meeting, where it was decided that £2 10s. would be charged for the tickets, to include dinner, dancing and a Russian cabaret; proceeds to finance homes for old, displaced and homeless White Russians. As a start, tea, baby clothes and unlaid eggs were auctioned; the eggs fetch £1 a dozen, Mrs. Geoffrey Pearson commissioning the first dozen. (How long would it take how many hens? One pictured them being assigned the orders in batches!) Someone anonymously gave a ring towards the cost of the band; programme advertisements were asked for at £25 a page; gifts were promised for a tombola, and a fortune-teller was foretold. Lady Kemball-Cook urged that rich people should be found who would smilingly pay all expenses, but other members of the committee, which included Lady Middleton, Lady Greville and Lady Suenson-Taylor, felt that more devious and usual means would be necessary.

FEB. 23.—From Portugal we had news of to-night's banquet, with dancing afterwards, for 300 people at the lovely little Palace of Queluz. Estoril, at the mouth of the Tagus and about half-an-hour in a jerking little train from Lisbon, is normally a summer sea-and-sand playground—bathing lasts through October—and winter sun resort. Now, like Lisbon, it is packed with N.A.T.O. delegates, in whose honour the banquet-ball is being given. Queluz, built in the eighteenth century, looks like a pocket-sized Versailles, with terraces, statues, water and formal clipped yew gardens. The palace is colour-washed pink with white facings and sage-green doors; the ballroom is pale-green, white and gold, panelled with mirrors, and the ceiling is decorated with those delicate gilded wreaths known in the houses of the French Regency period as "Chicorée." Two enormous chandeliers are filled with hundreds of real candles; the music room adjoining has heavy silver candlesticks and a massive Empire piano; the whole place is an amusing mixture of French formality and indigenous decorative tiles inherited partly from the Arabs and partly from the Dutch; and English Hepplewhite furniture: very suitable for a gathering of the nations. The British delegates include Sir Pierson Dixon, Sir Frederick Hoyer-Millar and Sir Edward Plowden; among the Defence Services Chiefs are Marshal of the R.A.F. Sir John Slessor, Air Chief Marshal Sir William Elliott and Gen. Sir Kenneth MacLean; Mr. Anthony Eden and Mr. Dean Acheson are, of course, among the key men. Distinguished Americans include Gen. Omar Bradley, Mr. Robert E. Lovett and Mr. Averell Harriman.

FEB. 20.—PREMIER DUKE. The Duke of Norfolk with his host at a luncheon given at the Savoy by Mr. and Mrs. H. Marsdon-Smith, to discuss the Première of *The Card*, in aid of the Animal Health Trust.

FEB. 20.—AT THE HOUSE OF LORDS. Lady Carisbrooke with Major Lord Ancaster went to a committee meeting to discuss the charity première of *Saturday Island*, planned for March 20 at the Odeon.

FEB. 20.—COURSING AT ALTCAR. Lord and Lady Bath stand one on each side of Mr. John Dewar, whose 20-to-1 dog, *Dew Whaler*, won the finals of the Waterloo Cup, blue riband of coursing, two days later. The Baths are very fond of coursing and go often in the West Country.

FEB. 22.—AT A TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY PARTY. Mrs. Edmund Ironside, daughter-in-law of Field-Marshal Lord Ironside, cuts her twenty-first birthday cake. She was formerly Miss Audrey Morgan-Grenville; her husband is beside her.

FEB. 23.—POINT-TO-POINTING. Miss Ursula Gloriachoun and Mr. James Hadley Bancock at the Oxford University Point-to-Point at Crowell, near Chinnor. This is one of the first of the season which lasts till May.

MR. AND MRS. E. D. O'BRIEN, WITH BRIDESMAIDS AND BEST MAN, OUTSIDE HOLY TRINITY, BROMPTON, AFTER THEIR WEDDING.

MR. O'BRIEN AND HIS BRIDE, FORMERLY MISS LEONORA RAILTON, WITH MR. AND MRS. F. J. ERROLL AT THE RECEPTION.

FEB. 26.—CHEERFUL WEDDING. The child bridesmaids at this merry morning wedding were the Misses Natalie and Geraldine O'Brien, daughters of the bridegroom, and the Misses Ann and Mary Barstow, his nieces; the other attendant was Miss Patricia Railton, sister of the bride; Mr. Colin Mann was best man. More about this wedding in the note on the right.

FEB. 26.—The marriage of Mr. Edward Donough (Toby) O'Brien, the popular writer of Our Motley Notes, to Miss Leonora Railton (photographs on the left) started sharp at 10.30 at Holy Trinity, Brompton, and despite the horrors of rush-hour travel there were plenty of well-wishing friends on both sides of the aisle. The bride, wearing white brocade and a Brussels lace veil, was followed by four little girls walking in very precise formation and wearing white dresses with orange sashes and hair ribbons; behind them the bride's sister, Miss Patricia Railton. Mr. John Boyd-Carpenter was to have been best man, but was tied down by the weight of the Budget, so Mr. Colin Mann took his place. At the reception afterwards, Sir Charles Petrie, the historian and biographer, made a very amusing speech, in which he said that even if his old friend Toby was not a Pillar of the State, he was at least Two Columns in *The Sketch*; he ended by saying that the bridegroom "would like to reply," which was, said Mr. O'Brien, a hideous misrepresentation. He then made everyone laugh a lot, saying he suggested sending his bride to the church and meeting her at the reception afterwards, as was his usual practice; he congratulated her for taking him on, with his "three pre-fabs" (he has a son besides the two daughter bridesmaids) who had been nagging him for ages with the unanswerable question, "Why don't you marry Leo?" They looked as pleased as he that he had; their stepmother is as gifted and courageous as she is charming, and was known as "Sten-gun Susie" when a code and cipher girl in Italy during the war.

There was a great variety of interesting people there; among the politicians Mr. Alan Lennox-Boyd, who has been Conservative M.P. for mid-Beds since 1931 and married Lady Patricia Guinness, and Mr. F. J. Erroll, who entered the House of Commons as Conservative Member for Altrincham and Sale in 1945; representing authors Sir James Laver, who also works at the Victoria and Albert Museum, with his wife, who is Veronica Turleigh, the actress; Mr. James Wentworth Day, whose writing is mainly about all kinds of sport; Mr. Derek Patmore and Sir Harry Brittain, who has many other activities and has just got back from Teneriffe. Gentlemen of the Press included Mr. Ronald Hyde; publicists Mr. Jack Beddington, Mr. John Metcalf and Mr. Mark Culme-Seymour; and there was a solid roomful more of well-assorted people.

FEB. 28.—At Burlington House we saw Field-Marshal Lord Alexander, who has had so many official engagements since arriving here from Canada on Feb. 26. He went alone to see the exhibition of pictures from the first hundred years of the Royal Academy, which ends on Mar. 6. Our new Defence Minister and his family are staying with Lady Alexander's mother, Lady Lucan, while they look for somewhere to live; they have sold their house *Nightingales* at Chalfont St. Giles because it is too far from London. Their eldest daughter, Lady Rose, has stayed behind in Canada at the McGill University, Montreal; the elder boy, Shane, is at Harrow; the younger, Brian, is twelve. The Alexanders also have an adopted daughter of four called Susie. They celebrated their return to England with a family dinner party on the 26th at Lady Lucan's Portman Square flat. Also there were Col. J. H. Bevan and Lady Barbara Bevan, whose daughter Jennifer got married last week.

FEB. 27.—SNOW PRINCESS. From Storlien in Sweden to-day came this photograph of Princess Désirée, daughter of the King and Queen of Sweden.

FEB. 27.—FIRST INVESTITURE. Sir John Rothenstein, seen here with Lady Rothenstein and their daughter, Miss Lucy Rothenstein, received the K.B. at the Queen's first investiture. He is Director and Keeper of the Tate Gallery.

Notes and Pictures from Our Social Diary

FEB. 29.—A quick round of the picture galleries included bright and gay paintings by Harry Weinberger at the Leger—some nice roof-top views and bits of Norfolk and Italy; at Gimpel Fils, Peter Lanyon from St. Ives, a much admired young contemporary painter, who has exhibited in London, Paris and New York; at the Fine Art Society, dreamy little landscape drawings by John White Abbot, an early nineteenth-century surgeon who drew and painted in his spare time.

MARCH 1.—There was bright sunshine for the Sparkford Vale Point-to-Point at Babcary, Somerset, but a wicked little wind to sting the enormous crowd. The going was perfect and there was some excellent racing. Lord Stavordale was a steward and had brought his daughter Tessa with him; Sir Peter Farquhar, Master of the Portman Foxhounds, was judge; his wife was wearing a very smart suède and lambskin jacket. The open race was won by Mr. S. Turner's *Nylon*, from the Worcester Hunt, in an exciting finish with Mr. Hutching's *Le Daim*, Blackmore Vale, second. Twenty-two-year-old Miss Bridget Clowes won the ladies' race on her good horse *Cæsar IV.*; she wore a most attractive plaid top-coat over her racing kit in the paddock. Colonel Geoffrey Phipps-Hornby, who rode so many winners at West Country meetings in pre-war days, had come from his home in Sussex; also there were Lady Lettice Ashley-Cooper, who hunts with the Portman, and Lord Darling from the East Devon; they both had horses running in the open race.

In London, Mr. R. G. K. Mansfield, Lord and Lady Sandhurst's younger son, married Miss H. G. Duffus, only daughter of the late Mr. J. M. C. Duffus and Mrs. Duffus, of Claverhouse. The bride was given away by her brother, Mr. James Coutts-Duffus, and had three pages, David Parker, Guy Mansfield and Charles Gullick; also six bridesmaids: Miss Stewart Meiklejohn, Miss Margaret Robb, Miss Mary Passey, Miss Eve Stephens, Miss Hazel Fullerton and Miss Margaret Ellis. The bride was formerly in the W.R.N.S. as a driver; Mr. Mansfield is in the wine business and the honeymoon is to be spent in Portugal and Madeira.

People at the wedding included Mr. Mansfield's brother-in-law and sister, Lord and Lady Parker; Lord and Lady Macclesfield; Lord and Lady Westmorland; Lord and Lady Waleran; Lord and Lady Headley; Lord and Lady Mancroft; Lord and Lady Selsdon, and nearly 500 more.

FEB. 28.—ASTOR WEDDING. Mr. F. D. L. Astor, second son of Lord and Lady Astor, married Miss Bridget Wreford, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Cyril Wreford, of Odicknoll, Edginswell, Devon.

FEB. 29.—DEWAR TROPHY AWARDED. Mr. William Lyons, chairman and managing director of Jaguar Cars, Ltd., receives the trophy from Mr. William Andrews, chairman of the R.A.C. The award was for the most outstanding engineering and technical achievement, 1951.

MARCH 1.—TWO HUNDREDWEIGHT OF CAKE. There was a truly baronial cake at the reception after Miss Helen Duffus's marriage to Mr. Ralph Mansfield.

FEB. 29.—FIRST ANNIVERSARY FOUR YEARS HENCE. This leap-year day bride is Mlle. Evelyn Frailong, from Paris, who married Mr. David Drysdale.

MARCH 2.—THE KAISER'S GRANDSON MARRIES. Prince Wilhelm Karl of Prussia married Baroness Armgard Von Veltheim at Destedt, a little Brunswick village.

MARCH 4.—IN IDEAL SURROUNDINGS. Mrs. Winston Churchill and Lady Dorothy Macmillan sit in the dining-room of a "People's House" at the Ideal Home Exhibition; the "People's Curtains" are nice and jaunty. Lady Dorothy is the wife of the Housing Minister.

MARCH 4.—FIRST DAY AT CHELTENHAM. The first three in the Champion Hurdle Challenge Cup take the last hurdle. Mr. M. Kingsley's *Sir Ken*, No. 19, was the winner; *Noholme* (24) finished second, with *Approval* third.

MARCH 2.—Called on Adrian Daintrey to see the collection of drawings he was showing in his Chelsea house. Most of them were already sold; T. S. Eliot bought one of St. Germain des Près; Matthew Smith, Canterbury Cathedral. There was an odd coincidence when Mr. Eliot was looking at the latter, scene of his famous play—Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Beckett came in, providing the name of the murderee like a clue in a crossword. Most of the drawings are of London, Paris and Venice; there are also some portrait drawings, including one of pretty young Miss Miranda Fairbairn, one of Mrs. William McGowan, and an amusing one of Osbert Lancaster. Princess Joan Aly Khan bought four drawings, one of which showed Venice. Mr. Aubrey Baring bought a drawing of Carlton House Terrace; Mr. Keith Miller-Jones, who married Miss Betty Askwith, Lord Askwith's novelist daughter, commissioned one of Egerton Terrace, where he lives. Other visitors were Princess Vsevolode of Russia, who was Lady Mary Lygon; Mr. Walter Fletcher, M.P.; Mrs. Henry Yorke; her pretty young niece, Miss Josephine Corry, and Mr. John Hayward, the book expert. The very first visitor was a cat which popped up through the floorboards like a pantomime demon king, disconcerting Mr. Daintrey, some of whose paintings were to be seen besides the drawings on show. At one time he had a studio which had been used by the late Alastair Crowley for his nefarious rites.

MARCH 3.—It will be a quiet spring for the young; the dates of most dances have been changed. The Bachelors' Ball has been put off until next year; Lady Rosemary Rubens, chairman of the Pied Piper Ball in aid of the N.S.P.C.C., has announced a change of date from March 13 to June 12; the dance at Hurlingham in aid of the Family Welfare Association has been put off indefinitely; Mrs. William Murray's dance for Miss Susan Lockwood will now be on June 3 instead of March 17; the England Ball, in aid of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, has been changed from May 15 to June 12; Lady Galway is president of this ball, Lady Halifax, vice-president. Tickets from the chairman, Mrs. G. Langley-Taylor. Lady Dufferin, who had a car accident lately and is recuperating in Rome, is giving a dance for her younger daughter, Lady Perdita Blackwood, on July 16; the two dances for Lady Marye Pepys are to be on June 6 and July 4; the Cygnets' Ball is due on June 21; Mrs. Robin Filmer Wilson is giving a dance for her daughter, Lady Caroline Child-Villiers, on June 10 at 24, Belgrave Square, lent by the Spanish Ambassador; Lady Ancaster's dance for Lady Jane Willoughby is to be on July 4 at Lady Astor's home, Cliveden; there will be a dance in aid of the Olympic Games International Equestrian Fund at Blenheim Palace on June 6; the date of the Royal Caledonian Ball has been changed from May 23 to July 18; Queen Charlotte's Ball is still on May 7.

MARCH 4.—HURRYING TO THE PADDOCK. The National Hunt Meeting at Cheltenham is always very popular. Here are Lord and Lady Allerton.

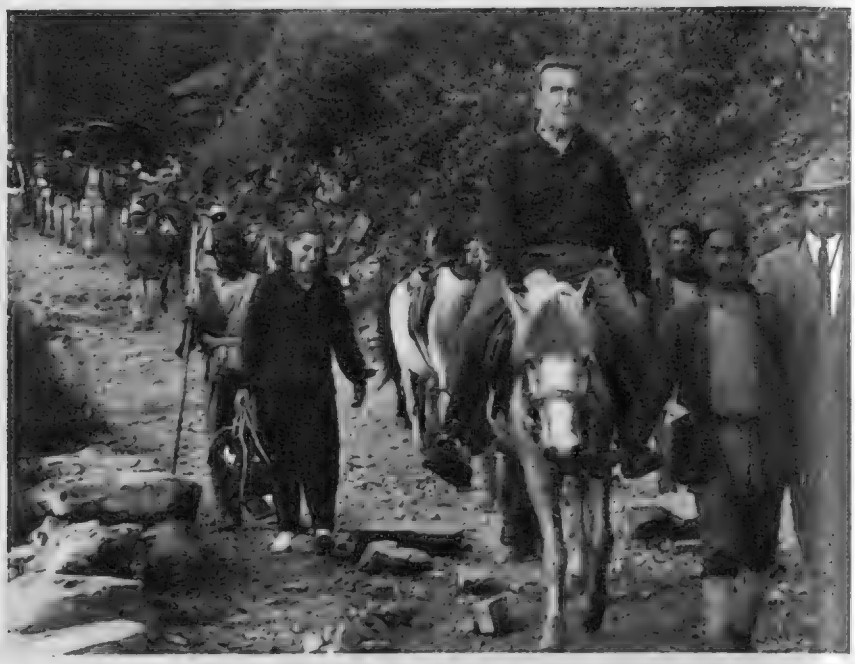
MARCH 4.—UMBRELLA CONFERENCE. The Duchess of Marlborough (right), with Lady Sefton, were among the many people at Cheltenham.

MARCH 4.—BETWEEN RACES. Lord and Lady Rupert Lanarch-Nevill look as if they have backed a loser. He is the younger son of Lord Abergavenny.

WE TAKE OFF OUR HAT TO . . .

Needlewomen far and near.

The public was recently invited to look for a needle in a haystack behind St. Paul's Cathedral; Miss Rhoda Selby (below), a City worker, succeeded in finding it and was rewarded with a sewing-machine: a real treasure the world over, judging by the attitude of the Arab woman (above), who carried hers with her everywhere during the Tripoli riots for fear of losing it.



Mr. Chester Bowles, for carrying his credentials Yankee-Doodle style.

Mr. Chester Bowles, first U.S. Ambassador to Nepal, rode twenty miles to present his credentials to King Tribhuvan Vir Bikram Shah. His wife and children went with him, and the twenty-mile journey took a whole day; his daughter Sally is seen walking beside him.

The cyclist from slumberland.

Mr. P. Kerrison, leader of the "Dodgers Penny Farthing Cycling Club" at Norwich, is not content with the fifty old machines he has collected from junk heaps and private sources all over the country, but has manufactured a bone-shaker of his own from an old iron bedstead.

LINDY LOO

by Grace Wheatley, A.R.W.S.

"Younger than Springtime"

SPRING ON THE WING

The Halcyon is a legendary bird which nested on the waves—and, in point of fact, birds do nest in many places nearly as strange. Often enough, too, their preparations are the first sign of spring, for they always seem to know when it is due and hatch their young accordingly in good time to enjoy the halcyon days named after their fabulous ancestor.

Photographed by M. D. England.

SCOURGE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE.—A magnificent and arrogant sparrowhawk in the nest with her young—the only small creatures that are safe from her. Although shot in great numbers by farmers, these ruthless birds are still common, even near London.

HUNGER IN THE REEDS.—As trim as the reeds she nests in, the reed-warbler looks after her young. This bird has a strange, harsh song like the voice of the wild, marshy places it inhabits ; it builds its nest between, and supported by, several reed-stems.

BIRDS ON THE BARK.—Two nuthatches wanting to know what everything is about. They cleverly fix nuts in crevices of bark and crack them with their beaks ; nest in holes, plastering up the entrances with mud until they are only just big enough to let them in.

AHEAD OF THE CUCKOO.—After the long winter a wryneck surveys the mellowed world of spring. This is a migratory bird which usually arrives a few days before the cuckoo.

AT HOME IN THE TREETOPS.—Rooks nest in colonies high in the trees; this one was photographed 60 ft. up. Rooks do both good and harm; they eat injurious insects, but also growing crops.

NURSERY IN THE WOODSHED.—This chaffinch has nested inside a garden shed, most uncommon for the species, which normally builds in trees and hedges.

RIGHT WAY UP FOR THE FAMILY.—The brilliant, elusive kingfisher is taking his family the fish he has caught; if he were going to swallow it himself it would be held with its head pointing down his throat. Kingfishers excavate tunnels in banks for their nests which they make with fishbones.

OUR BOOKSHELF

THE CASE OF CHARLES DEXTER WARD. By H. P. Lovecraft. *(Gollancz ; 9s. 6d.)*

WHAT DREAMS MAY COME. By Cynthia Asquith. *(James Barrie ; 10s. 6d.)*

MAKING A FILM. Chronicled and Edited by Lindsay Anderson. *(George Allen and Unwin ; 17s. 6d.)*

RETURN TO CHESTERTON. By Maisie Ward. *(Sheed and Ward ; 21s.)*

by RUPERT CROFT-COOKE

H. P. LOVECRAFT'S *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* is a literary curiosity. This author's previous book of ghost stories, *Haunter of the Dark*, gained him comparison with M. R. James and Arthur Machen, but, in fact, the influence is an earlier one, for he has gone back to the Gothic tales of horror of a century-and-a-half ago, to Horace Walpole and *The Castle of Otranto* and all the terrors of ruined abbeys, screams in the night, and devildom which were popular long before the chilly subtleties of fear induced by Marion Crawford, W. W. Jacobs, Oliver Onions, Algernon Blackwood and the two ghost-story-tellers already mentioned. His are more bludgeoning and brutal terrors; he dares you to read on as he shouts horror in your ear and lays icy fingers on you. There are no nuances here. When the secrets of Charles Dexter Ward, the devil-possessed antiquarian, are investigated, we hear "a godless sound." "To call it a dull wail, a doom-dragged whine or a hopeless howl of chorused anguish and stricken flesh without mind would be to miss its most quintessential loathsomeness and soul-sickening overtones." We see "ominous-looking leaden coffins" and eventually perceive at the bottom of a bricked-in well, something which reminds the author that "there is about certain outlines and entities a power of symbolism and suggestion which acts frightfully on a sensitive thinker's perspective and whispers terrible hints of obscure cosmic relationships and unnameable realities behind the protective illusions of common vision." So the screaming monstrosities of the tale are revealed one after another in a crescendo of adjectival menace. For those who like the thoroughly ghastly, the loudly macabre, with all the stenches and moans of ravished churchyards, this is the book. It is grandiloquently rather than cunningly written and a little too horrific to be horrifying. But it certainly goes the whole hog.

LADY CYNTHIA ASQUITH'S ghosts in *What Dreams May Come* are less noisy but more disturbing and remind one that the proper medium for their presentation is the short story rather than the full-length novel. The first story here, "The Lovely Voice," though it has a certain quality of the bizarre, does not tell of ghosts, but of a murder by a woman and the discovery of the body by a little girl. The murderess has a peculiarly beautiful voice and "dewy loveliness," and this beauty, as always when cleverly used in such a tale, adds a twist of horror to the situation. "The White Moth" is less gruesome, telling how the spirit of a young dead poetess inhabits intermittently the body of a modern out-of-doors girl. There is humour in this as well as pathos. "The Follower" has a trick ending but a genuine creepiness, and "The Playfellow" is a tragic piece about the ghosts of children. "The Corner Shop" is more conventional, depending on a person being introduced as real, speaking and moving as a live being, but turning out to have been long dead at the time of his appearance. "The First Night" brings a ghost to the stage—never the happiest combination—and "From What Beginnings" is frankly unsuccessful. "In a Nutshell" is almost too convincing, the people in it so well conceived and interpreted that the supernatural element seems out of place. But this is a connoisseur's collection, as good as any of its kind published in the last few decades. In every sense a haunting book.

OF *Making a Film* its author, Mr. Lindsay Anderson, says: "This is not one of those books which seeks to go out among the literate unconverted and persuade them that the cinema is an *art*." The denial is welcome and later justified. The book tells, in an easy, straightforward way, the whole story of the film *Secret People* from first ideas to presentation. It is not forbiddingly technical or esoteric; it is not too tiresomely anecdotal or chatty. It has a ring of truth which is only made more convincing by the author's warning that "no such account as this can either tell the whole truth or even be quite all true." First in the form of a diary, with the entries increasing in size as the film goes into production, Mr. Anderson jots down everything he saw and heard, making no selection on grounds of general interest or readability, but faithful to an impossible ideal of absolute completeness. This is illustrated with typewritten schedules, reports and other documents, and embellished with personal reflections. "The atmosphere approximates to that of a battlefield: we are fighting for the film, and the enemy is time. Members of the unit are like soldiers in an army exposed as much to the inevitable tedium of inactivity as to excitement of action. All, that is, but the few who know what is going on and why, and have no leisure to be bored: Thorold, the commander-in-chief and architect of the campaign; Spike, his indefatigable adjutant; Gordon, who can rest neither while a shot is being taken nor while it is being lined-up; Phyllis, recording angel of the conflict." This is followed by a series of illuminating photographs of technicians, actors, director, locations, and so on. Then comes the complete shooting script as it stood when the film went into production. Finally there are appendices—the Treatment expanded into the Shooting Script, the Music, a plan of Ealing Studios, the full Credit Titles of the film and some biographical notes. The whole thing was well worth doing and should be of great interest to those more curious film-goers who like to see the works.

MISS MAISIE WARD'S *Return to Chesterton* is a welcome and voluminous postscript to her biography. So much material has reached her since she wrote that spirited book, so many new stories and recollections and so many unpublished letters and fragments by Chesterton himself that she has made this gorgeous book by selecting them from, not stretching them to book-length. It seems likely that this, too, may lead to another collection, for such material must be almost inexhaustible.

The book follows roughly the course of Chesterton's life. It opens with some stories of his childhood and years at St. Paul's School, where masters would say despairingly, "Chesterton, Chesterton, have you no care for books?" It takes him through the Slade and unearths some early writings, through the early days of journalism and friendship with Belloc, the early years of marriage and the first books, with a battery of telling anecdotes and verbal snapshots. It discusses his own and his wife's families, gives some memories of him by his barbers and taximen and the people of Beaconsfield, includes a "Saga of Secretaries," for Chesterton had many, and breaks into verse on every few pages—both Chesterton's and others'—or has drawings made by him on family occasions. It is, of course, a happy book; it could not be otherwise, and treats of Chesterton's last days and death with a decent reserve which he would have appreciated.

From *The Shakespeare Country*, photographs by Alfred Furness with an Introduction by H. J. Massingham (Allen and Unwin, 42s.). This picture shows the stile at Charlecote, reputed to be at the spot at which Shakespeare was caught in the deer-stealing episode.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

SHOUT ALOUD SALVATION.
By Charles Terrot. *(Collins ; 10s. 6d.)*

Almost a documentary of the early days of the Salvation Army, threaded by a conventional love-story between one of William Booth's first Hallelujah Lasses and a naval lieutenant.

THE DEVIL'S ELBOW.
By Gladys Mitchell. *(Michael Joseph ; 9s. 6d.)*

A new, rather didactic whodunit in which Mrs. LeStrange Bradley displays her crocodilian charms as a detective.

THE SEA ROSE.
By Paul Vialar. *(Nevill ; 11s. 6d.)*

A filmic story of life on board a small French tramp steamer with a curious cargo and even more curious crew.

LOVE BADE ME WELCOME.
By John Lodwick. *(Heinemann ; 13s. 6d.)*

A somewhat pretentiously presented murder mystery, set in Paris.

THE EDGE OF THE FOREST.
By James Dillon White. *(Heinemann ; 12s. 6d.)*

Novel about a camp for displaced persons. The details seem authentic and there is a persuasive air of reality about events and people.

LIEUTENANT HORNBLOWER.
By C. S. Forester. *(Michael Joseph ; 12s. 6d.)*

There is little to be said about this, the seventh in the series, except that it will please as many readers as its predecessors.

TALKING OF TELEVISION

By Cyril Butcher

WHILE browsing through the pile of documental *curiosa*, which we habitually keep in a folder marked "Requiring Immediate Attention," we chanced upon a letter which was dated nearly two years ago. It was a polite note from the author of a television series, which we had found particularly amusing, thanking us for saying so. It ended with the words: "I look forward to the time when television writers and critics will be as important as those of the stage and the films." It set us wondering. Television has travelled a considerable road in those two years, and its writers are slowly but surely gaining general recognition. But what about its critics—do they fulfil an increasingly important function, or are they just filling up space in their several publications?

We have tried to approach this question objectively, though television has long been a personal ruling passion, and we consider that any function in connection with it a matter of responsibility and moment.

Of course, the critic's main duty is to inform his readers from the vantage point of his own expert knowledge of his medium and to assess the work of those responsible for the production of the offering he is considering. But in the case of theatre, film or literary criticism he has a very direct influence on financial profit and loss. His verdict may bring the customers flocking to the box-office or keep them sedulously away; it may cause the publisher of a book to scramble frantically to fulfil orders for it, or to scratch his head as he wonders what to do with the unwanted copies lying in his storeroom. Consequently, critics in these media not infrequently achieve considerable personal importance, due to the infallible rule that money talks.

THIS very telling step in the professional ladder is denied the television critic—in this country, at any rate. He may deal—as in this column—with matters of general interest in connection with the medium. But when it comes to actual criticism, he deals largely with the past. A programme comes on the air, it is seen and it is gone. There are repeats, but these are in the minority. He cannot urge his readers to see, or not to see, a certain production, because by the time his words appear in print "they 've had it." Nor does he influence financial success or disaster. A programme is planned, its cost calculated, and on it goes. The only difference between a good notice and a bad one is a pat on the back or otherwise, to the people concerned from the higher-ups.

But the first two functions of the television critic do remain and exert a powerful, though indirect, influence. This is not only our own opinion, for we have been at pains to have it confirmed from readers and the B.B.C.

With regard to the reader, the critic assists him to formulate his own system of "selective viewing," without which television becomes a nightly bore. The *Radio Times* should be used like a ménu and programmes chosen with the same care as particular dishes, to suit the individual taste. And here it must be underlined that the critic can only be of service to the reader if continuity exists between them; if the reader has had the opportunity of matching his own judgment against the critic's on numerous occasions.

The next step in the chain of influence is the comment with which viewers bombard the B.B.C.—and they are fervent letter writers. These are analysed into what is known as "Viewing Figures," giving both the size of the audience for any particular programme and its average reaction to it. These figures give everyone concerned furiously to think and certainly affect future planning. The critic's influence may be roundabout, but it is there.

Within the B.B.C. itself, we found an acute sensitivity to criticism of the more informed kind. This is welcomed, as television to-day expects to be treated as an adult medium. What it does deplore is the snappy, newsy paragraph which may dismiss a carefully prepared production by saying it was awful because the leading lady had a cold, or had arrived that day from the Cameroons.

But everyone admits that serious criticism—even though it may be a hideous pasting—is of great help. As Cecil Madden, Assistant Director of Programmes, says: "It keeps us in order and keeps our standards high." Another informant said that it was invaluable in maintaining an internal sense of proportion. Viewing figures can be misleading. A "Pop" programme may provoke an avalanche of rave letters (for the lower browed viewers are the most assiduous correspondents), even though those responsible know it is tripe. On the other hand, some of television's excursions into the realms of serious art have been rewarded by a cataract of abuse from the same nether-browed literati. The producer naturally feels somewhat dejected unless from the informed critic he finds that his effort was worth-while after all, that his caviare was appreciated by those of taste.

We are glad of the result of our stocktaking, for it has increased our sense of responsibility and sharpened our critical appraisal.

WHAT then do we say of Max Faber's adaptation of Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*? It was obviously given the painstaking care demanded by a major occasion and yet the verdict was: sound but undistinguished. The great Ibsen takes a deal of living up to and, unless he is given comparably great performances, he is apt to swamp the players. The major occasion showed the able cast, headed by Marius Goring, Marcia Ashton, Herbert Lomas, Geoffrey Keen and Freda Bamford, not at their best. The finger of fault is not easy to place, but one had the impression that the characters had no volition of their own and were being pushed round by the author.

The *Norman Wisdom Show* proved a disappointment, chiefly through its lack of originality and lack of balance. As in other "Shows," it consisted of the star, his stooge, and a range of supporting variety acts. These latter were lumped together at the beginning and the second half was devoted to more or less solid Wisdom. We do not complain of his wishing to show his versatility, by singing, dancing and playing the saxophone, as well as the fool, but we do demand that these facets of his talent be spread more intelligently through the programme and given more imaginative handling.

NOW, in order to prove that we are not in a crusty mood, let us give high marks to a delightfully fresh, light comedy by Geoffrey Kerr, *The Monster of Killoon*, produced by Dennis Vance and acted charmingly by Petula Clark, Jack Warner, John Kelly and others. The story of an hotel-keeper in Ireland inventing the monster to stimulate trade is a chuckle-making mixture of artfulness, cynicism and sentiment, and provided a happy evening's viewing.

May we recommend that Messrs. Edgar Lustgarten and John Irwin do not allow the speakers of *In the News* complete *carte blanche*? Certain of the remarks made by A. J. P. Taylor—who seems to be a self-appointed *enfant terrible* of the programme—were so beyond the pale (February 29) that the well-deserved trouncing by Robert Boothby was only a slight palliative.

WATCHING BRIEF

Highlights of the Next Fortnight

THE most important event, naturally, is the opening of the Scottish television transmitter at Kirk O'Shotts on March 14. The opening ceremony will be at 7.30, when Lord Tedder, one of the B.B.C. Governors, will invite the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Rt. Hon. James Stuart, M.P., to inaugurate the service, which will make yet another addition to television's growing family. On March 16, the evening service from St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, will be televised, and on the 19th, O.B.s will be in Glasgow to show us a performance of Barrie's play *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*, from the Citizen's Theatre.

On March 15, sound producer Martyn C. Webster, after twenty-five years in broadcasting, will revert to the 'prentice stage, when he tries his hand at television. His début is to be a mystery serial in six parts, *The Broken Horseshoe*, by Francis Durbridge, with John Robinson, John Byron, Andrew Crawford, Barbara Lott and Elizabeth Maude in the cast.

We slaves to Lady Nicotine may find a solution to our problem when *No Smoking*, by George Moresby White and Rex Rienits, takes the air on March 16 and 20. On the other hand, we may not; but the play sounds fun. In the cast, Alan Webb, Robert Beatty, Jane Barrett, Shelagh Fraser, Francis de Wolff, H. G. Stoker and Leonard Sachs. Production by Stephen Harrison.

Will the culprit be found out? That is the question which Frederick Knott poses in his play *Dial "M" for Murder*, which will be seen on March 23 and 27. Leading parts played by Elizabeth Sellars, Emrys Jones and Raymond Huntly. Production: Ian Atkins; direction: Julian Amyes.

Robin Hood wins in the archery contest, watched by his father (*right*), later murdered by Red Gill (*left*) ; as a result, Robin swears vengeance and forms his band of outlaws.

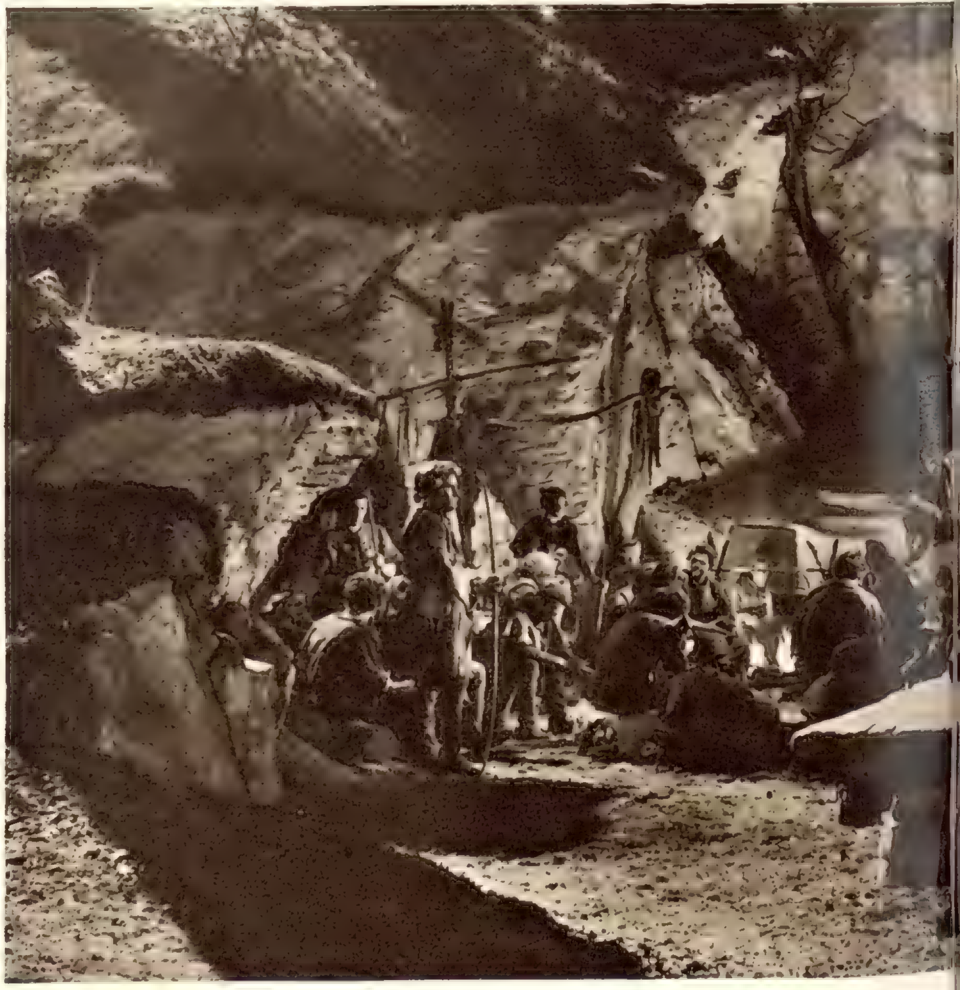
Meeting the giant Little John on a bridge, Robin engages him in a quarterstaff battle and is defeated. John, impressed by the outlaw's spirited effort, joins his band.

The Sheriff is captured by the bandits, forced to eat with them and to pay for his meal ; he is then tied back to front on his horse and returned to Nottingham.

ROBIN HOOD AND

1839—BY DANIEL MACLISE, R.A. (*above*)

This painting, dated 1839, is from the recent exhibition, The First Hundred Years of the Royal Academy, and is reproduced by courtesy of Captain E. G. Spencer-Churchill. It shows Robin and his merry men roistering among the great oaks, which would make a good setting for the 7-ft.-high statue of Robin which Mr. James Woodford, R.A., is carving for Nottingham.



HIS MERRY MEN

1952—BY WALT DISNEY *(below and surrounding)*

The main scene (*below*) from Walt Disney's film has almost a monkish air by comparison with the painting (*above*). Sherwood Forest has sprung a convenient quarry to shelter the bandits, who have rigged up a refectory table rather like Stonehenge. The world première of the film is at the Leicester Square Theatre to-morrow, March 13.

Maid Marian, disguised as a page, trudges through Sherwood Forest with the wandering minstrel, Allan-A-Dale, in search of Robin Hood.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Queen Eleanor and Prince John watch Maid Marian hand over the money she has collected from Robin and his men for King Richard's ransom.

Richard the Lionheart, heavily got up in black, returns and is met by the foresters, who are hostile and do not recognise him until he has announced himself.

★ First Choice ★

AT THE THEATRE . .

NIGHTMARE ABBEY

(Westminster)

"LET us all be unhappy together," murmurs Christopher Glowry during the course of the evening. Mr. Glowry owns Nightmare Abbey, between the sea and the Lincolnshire fens. It is a highly romantic and melancholy place, an "ample pile" complete with owls, ivy, weeds and cobwebs. Mr. Glowry enjoys gloom, and he likes nothing more than to have a few kindred spirits glooming with him: Mr. Toobad, for example, whose favourite speech is a text from Revelation about the Devil "having great wrath"; Scythrop Glowry, Christopher's son, who proposes to reform the world, and who is acutely miserable into the bargain; and Mr. Flosky, a morbid philosopher, who is always apt to observe that, to the vulgar, "an unusual collocation of words, involving a juxtaposition of antiperistatical ideas, immediately suggests the notion of hyperoxysophistical paradoxology."

Thomas Love Peacock assembled this odd house-party during 1818 in what Priestley has called "one of the best literary satires in the language." He was satirising the excesses of the Romantic Movement. John Fernald writes of its solemn nonsense in a Westminster programme-note (this programme is an uncommon prize): "Novelists obsessed with earnest heroes who died for love of serious heroines locked in Gothic towers, poets intoxicated with concepts of free love and revolutionary zeal," and so forth. The book is endlessly comic; but its admirers wondered a little when they heard it would appear on the stage. Although Peacock framed much of the narrative in dialogue, he could not have imagined that it would flash in the theatre. Rather, it has seemed to need the secret chuckle in the study.

No matter. Anthony Sharp has taken the risk and dramatised *Nightmare Abbey*. The London Mask Theatre has taken a bigger risk and presented it. The result is now one of the wittiest and freshest evenings in London. I think that visitors who do not know Peacock might do well to look at the novel before they set out. There is only a trace of plot. Mr. Fernald says that what there is has "all the requirements of situation, climax, suspense and dénouement." Maybe; but we think first of the dialogue and of the extraordinary collection of types gathered at Nightmare. It may or may not help to realise that Flosky derives from Coleridge and Scythrop from Shelley; and that, in making his version, Mr. Sharp has deleted the charming Mr. Cypress who stands for Byron.

Few, I am sure, will fail to appreciate the solemn extravagance of it all, the brooding melancholy, the verbal paroxysms of Flosky, Glowry's settled gloom, the death's-head lamenting of Toobad, the troubles of Scythrop—misanthrope and reformer, crossed in love—and the chanting of the "round" that begins: "Seamen three! What men be ye?" Where Mr. Sharp has added to Peacock, as in the second half of the evening, he has done so with agreeable deftness and tact. There is nothing here to worry the Peacockian who has long cherished *Nightmare Abbey* and such another wild conversation-piece as *Crotchet Castle*.

The Westminster performances are true to Peacock. It would be hard to improve upon Charles Lloyd Pack's moodiness as Glowry; or Alan MacNaughtan's dark distress as Scythrop: they play relishingly the scene in which Scythrop has to extemporise a tragedy about the Grand Mogul who has taken lodgings in Kensington. Geoffrey Dunn holds the languor of Listless, and Richard Warner enjoys the volcanic verbiage of Flosky. The sleep-walking steward Crow and Raven, the butler with the staggers, are nicely elaborated—but not carried too far—by Harold Goodwin and Gerald Cross. "Let us all be unhappy together." Why not? It makes the happiest of evenings.

NIGHTMARE ABBEY. Marionetta (Valerie Hanson) entertains the company with a song at the harp. L. to r., Hon. Mr. Listless (Geoffrey Dunn), Mr. Hilary (Donald Eccles) and Scythrop (Alan MacNaughtan).

NIGHTMARE ABBEY. The romantic Scythrop, who proposes to reform the world and is acutely miserable into the bargain, is stricken with love for the attractive Marionetta. The production is a London Mask Theatre enterprise.

NIGHTMARE ABBEY. Mr. Glowry (Charles Lloyd Pack) and Scythrop, his son, survey the punch-bowl made from the skull of Great Uncle Horace.

. . with J. C. TREWIN

KING LEAR. "Blow wind and crack your cheeks." King Lear (Stephen Murray) and the Fool (Leo McKern) in the storm scene.

★ Also Chosen ★

KING LEAR

(Old Vic)

WHEN the curtain rises we see before us a spiked wooden portcullis, a redoubtable palisade. It swings aside, and presently we are at the pagan court of Lear. This is plainly the Dawn in Britain. The Sun emblem glitters; uplifted braziers burn dully. Everything for a moment is slightly larger than life-size. Only Cordelia seems to be a fragile blossom lost on some primeval heath. These first moments are compelling and direct. Our hopes mount. Surely (so we thought at the première), the Lear may carry it through, match the storm in the mind with the "to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain."

Alas for hope! In conception, Hugh Hunt's revival does no injustice to the tragedy, but the performance disappoints. Stephen Murray's Lear proves to be an honest thrust at the part, no more. Here a passage is impressive in strength, and another in pathos. Yet nothing lasts. The Lear neither scalds us with excitement as Olivier's did, nor holds the Olympian majesty of Devlin's, nor has Gielgud's last insupportable grief. Stephen Murray, an actor of quality (I recall his Duke in a Vic *Measure For Measure*) lacks the giant's stride. I shall remember him defying the storm, and also his dazed misery while the Fool is a sad comforter at his side. Elsewhere, the speaking falls to monotony; the poetry comes to us in intermittent gusts. Some years ago Hugh Hunt produced *King Lear* imaginatively, with William Devlin and a Bristol Old Vic cast. Devlin fell like a mighty oak; the fall of the latest Lear would not have stirred the forest.

What, then, shall we keep in memory? I shall think of Daphne Slater's Cordelia, frail, naturally moving; Peter Coke's Edgar, more particularly in the second half of the play when he has thrown off Poor Tom; certain scenes of André Morell's Kent; and the Wicked Sisters of Coral Browne and Freda Jackson, though I have been more chilled by other Gonerils and Regans. John Phillips's Gloucester is downright and true; but at the première I was not very happy with the Fool of Leo McKern, who looked like a wandering Chinese or Tibetan philosopher; the Edmund, who resembled a Red Indian; or the Oswald.

During the first half of the play I found myself scratching as usual on the programme, noting such things as the Fool's silent recognition of Kent, the way in which Regan's line, "What needs one?" was isolated and emphasised—Regan is the crueller of the sisters—and the Fool's plaiting of a noose in the hovel, an action that prepares us for the last "And my poor Fool is hang'd." But once the interval was over I ceased to scribble. The tragedy moved unremarkably towards its end. Now, on the morning after the play, I remember first the Cordelia and Daphne Slater's child-like gentleness at the words: "And so I am" and "No cause, no cause." She is a most sensitive actress.

RED LETTER DAY

(Garrick)

WE are required, in this comedy by Andrew Rosenthal, to offer many happy returns to an American wife-and-mother who has reached the alarming age of fifty. Fay Compton acts the woman with any amount of technical resource; and at moments, as during the telephone calls when she finds that her old acquaintances are deaf or dead, her sense of comedy triumphs. Except in such a scene as this, it is an artificial affair: the author seems, as a rule, to be a ventriloquist with a regiment of dummies. Nora Swinburne manages to humanise her part, as she always does. Hugh Williams is customarily correct. But it is not, I fear, a red-letter play.

Present and Future

I AM often asked what a visitor to London should see in the theatre during a week's visit. Inevitably it is an awkward question; so much depends on what Sam Weller would call the "taste and fancy" of the questioner. But let me suggest six nights at the theatre that may cover most tastes.

For a straight play, I propose *Waters of the Moon* (Haymarket), less because of the piece itself—though N. C. Hunter can generate atmosphere—than for the remarkable acting of a cast led by Dames Sybil Thorndike and Edith Evans, with Wendy Hiller and Kathleen Harrison. The night would be worth-while for that moment in the second act when Dame Sybil, up-stage at the piano, dominates the theatre.

My musical comedy would be *Gay's the Word* (Saville), in which Cicely Courtneidge, after more than a year's run, is still indomitable, and the Novello music and libretto and the Melville lyrics come up well. My revue is at the Globe Theatre; *The Lyric Revue*, wittily barbed and aided by the frenzy of Joan Heal. Irlin Hall, incarnation of a famous picture, sings one of the most moving little songs on the London stage. For fantastic comedy I would say *Nightmare Abbey* (Westminster), which is reviewed on the opposite page; for a thriller, either Agatha Christie's *The Hollow* (Ambassadors), a straightforward crossword-piece, or *Women of Twilight* (Vaudeville), a burning melodrama. And, for a classical revival, there is Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, at the Phœnix, in which John Gielgud and Diana Wynyard fight the Merry War as it has not been fought in our time. There may be room for a matinée; if so, try a farce, *The White Sheep of the Family*, at the Piccadilly Theatre.

NEW YORK AND ROME

Next, the plays to come. In London next Saturday (March 15) we have *Call Me Madam* at the Coliseum. Here Jack Hylton presents Billie Worth and Anton Walbrook in the Irving Berlin musical comedy, now in its second year on Broadway. Richard Bird produces; there is a cast of fifty; and the musical director, Cyril Ornadel, is one of the youngest to have had so much responsibility.

At Stratford-upon-Avon to-morrow (Thursday) the play is a different matter: *Coriolanus*, which opens a Festival planned until November 1. The Roman tragedy has been revived at Stratford only twice in twenty years. Anthony Quayle now heads a cast produced by Glen Byam Shaw, with Mary Ellis as Volumnia—her first appearance in Shakespeare in this country—and Michael Hordern as Menenius. The Virgilia ("my gracious silence") is Siobhan McKenna. There are five plays in this year's Festival: Ralph Richardson and Margaret Leighton appear in Michael Benthall's revival of *The Tempest* on March 25.

"A FLASHING KINGFISHER"

It has been said of George Farquhar's *The Constant Couple*, which precedes *The Way of the World* in the calendar of Restoration comedy, that it is to Congreve's play as the honest rubbed sheen of pewter to the frosty glitter of cut-glass. Alec Clunes has staged it twice with much acceptance at the Arts, and next Friday (March 14) he is to revive it at the Winter Garden, appearing again as Sir Harry Wildair, in which he has been called "a flashing kingfisher."

★ AT THE CINEMA ★

with C. A. LEJEUNE

THE BELLE OF NEW YORK : Fred Astaire and his newest partner, Vera-Ellen, whirl their way almost non-stop for more than eighty minutes, as if dancing were as easy as breathing.

"WITH the Spring comes Wendy," said J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan—a remark that used to puzzle me as a child, for it was so plain that Wendy, Peter, Hook, Nana and all the rest of them came, not with the Spring, but with Christmas.

Nevertheless, the line has always stayed at the back of my mind, and I found myself repeating it, with a variation, as I came away from *The Belle of New York*. "With the Spring comes Vera-Ellen," I said to myself, and even amused myself with the sort of joke that a donnish old gentleman of my acquaintance would describe as "a mild nursery"; calling her Primavera, and thinking how well the name became her.

This enchanting young thing, who seems to float on air when she dances, and even walks with the dainty steps of a ballerina, is Fred Astaire's new partner in *The Belle*, and never since Ginger Rogers has he had a better one. As a dancer, Vera-Ellen even excels her predecessor, and not the most subtle nor complicated routine that the veteran Astaire can devise appears to give her a moment's trouble. This effect, of course, is a delusion, for only a very practised performer could hope to dance with such apparent ease, but it is a pleasant delusion for the audience to cherish. The most refreshing thing in *The Belle of New York* is the way this amazing couple whirl their way almost non-stop through more than eighty minutes of it, as if dancing were as easy and natural as breathing.

The film itself is a very slight one and it is as well to be warned in advance that it has little in common with the old musical comedy from which it derives its title. There are a couple of the original numbers, with modern orchestration; a hint of the original plot; and a "period" wardrobe that brings the Edwardian costume bang into line with modern fashion. On the whole, it is inoffensive rather than inspired, but there is one number which, apart from the dancing, gives the film a more than evanescent value: an old-fashioned skating scene, daintily coloured and startlingly animated, based on a winter print by the celebrated Currier and Ives.

Warner Brothers should not have much difficulty in attracting and sustaining an audience for *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in which Vivien Leigh repeats the performance she gave in the London theatre, and Marlon Brando (whom you may remember from *The Men*) takes over the part created here by Bonar Colleano.

People will go to *Streetcar* looking for sensation, and they will not be disappointed. There is no need to do more than recapitulate the story, which is almost as well known by now as the plot of *Hamlet*. A delicately-bred Southern girl (using the word "girl" in the wide sense of a woman in her early thirties), already a nervous wreck from shock, grief, loneliness, vanity, drink and sexual weakness, comes to New Orleans to stay with her married sister. She is appalled by the conditions she finds there, in a tenement section that is a ruin of leprous, old-time grandeur. Everything about the place is repulsive to what is left of her once fastidious taste, but she does not realise that her own ruin is equally patent and contemptible to the men who look at her. She is seduced, with cold calculation, by her brother-in-law, while her sister is in hospital having a baby, goes out of her mind, and is finally committed to a mental home.

Streetcar is a dismal, dreadful, sordid picture, hideous in its naked glimpses of brutality, but the treatment gives it a sort of ragged grandeur. The acting is quite striking, and never for a moment plays for cheap sensation. To my mind, the most brilliant work comes from Marlon Brando, as the brother-in-law; a part which has to be played with the sub-human monstrosity of Caliban, and, to be successful, exact the same measure of pity. Vivien Leigh's lost heroine is a performance wonderfully contrived and sustained. She has plainly felt the part to the bone; laboured to perfect its technicalities, and stored up every lightest movement of them. Everything she does is right, and probably the only reason why her performance strikes one sometimes as less vivid and immediate than Mr. Brando's is that *she* seems to have planned it all out a good time ago, while *he* seems to be struggling to articulate a new experience.

In the final instance, though—and in the first instance too, for without this initial impulse the actors could never perform it as they do—the strength of *Streetcar* derives from Tennessee Williams' playwriting. Ugly, violent and eventually comfortless as it is, the thing has a quality of underlying pity that runs through all the author's work. It is clear to see in *The Glass Menagerie*, thinly veiled in *Summer and Smoke*, a troubled kind of pity that shines bright for a moment and then is lost again, like a star reflected in a muddy puddle.

Arnold Bennett is an author seldom read nowadays, so that the fact that *The Card* is not much like the original book may prove less distressing than the fact that it doesn't seem to be a wholly satisfactory vehicle for Alec Guinness.

Edward Henry Machin, "Denry," is a poor boy in the Potteries, who rises by the exercise of his own wits to a high position in local society and the honour of being the youngest-ever Mayor of Bursley. Denry is a card and a sharp one, and, although by no means common, rather splendidly vulgar; the whole point of the story lies in his exuberance in rising above heredity and environment into circumstances in which it has apparently not pleased God to set him. To establish this conflict between what he seemed born to be and what he manages to make himself is important, because there is hardly any other conflict in the story. Once Denry has started to climb, he climbs, and even the people he has outwitted regard his rise with tolerance and affection.

Alec Guinness is far too good an actor to give less than an intelligent performance in the part. But his intelligence in this case seems to be largely academic. The mind is present, but the heart seems missing. He has observed the comic superficialities of the part, without fully appearing to share the gusto that provoked them. The fun of *The Card* is mild, and springs more from a series of quaint Edwardian set-pieces than from any sustained comedy of character. Individual scenes can be charmingly entertaining, particularly when Glynis Johns, as a local dancing teacher, and Valerie Hobson, as a local countess, are involved in them. You will laugh at *The Card*, I think, but intermittently, and you should laugh more if you live in the suburbs than in the Five Towns.

It was a brave enterprise to bring T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* to the cinema, a place to which this long, serene poet's chronicle, half-morality play and half-historical argument, seems in nowise constitutionally adapted. Only a man who loved and reverenced the subject could have had the courage, faith and practical persistence to carry the hard task through to its conclusion. Producer-director George Hoellering's patent devotion to poet T. S. Eliot is perhaps the most moving quality of the film.

It has taken Mr. Hoellering four long years to devise and provide for *Murder in the Cathedral* the visual setting that he felt the words demanded. His studio was a bombed church in North London, which he turned into a perfect replica of the nave of Canterbury Cathedral; his materials were woven and turned and painted and carved by hand; his designs were modelled from contemporary architecture and decoration; his Thomas à Becket was confided to Father John Groser, a priest and not a professional actor.

There is not one haphazard nor ill-considered moment in the film, which has clearly been designed with the shining desire to propagate the gospel of Mr. Eliot among the millions who may not have read the play nor seen it in the theatre. *Murder in the Cathedral* suggests a noble concerto, in which the reciting voice is the solo performer. Slowly, with ritual and measure, the poetry leads the way; slowly, carefully, almost adoringly, with an unostentatious hint of riches, the pictures accompany. The work is never less than scholarly and dignified, but 135 minutes of it, taken at a slow tempo, turns out to be a considerable ordeal. I couldn't help feeling that Mr. Eliot, champion though he is, ended by being a bit of an incubus to his own picture. Mr. Hoellering so obviously has a wealth of lovely things to show us that we fret to see them; and I, unregenerate, found myself constantly longing to sneak away from the poetry into the prop. department and have a good root round.

THE CARD : Bursley's youngest-ever Mayor, Denry Machin, The Card (Alec Guinness), arrives at the Town Hall for his inauguration accompanied by Nellie (Petula Clark).

"I had to choose between a spring costume or new curtains for the castle."

". . . and in this bulge I keep my toilette."

"I suppose that to future generations we may appear faintly ridiculous."

"Personally, I always believe in travelling light."

FASHIONS THAT BLOOMED IN THE SPRING . . . . TRA-LA!

Specially drawn for "THE SKETCH" by ffolkes.

THE PAINT SPRAY

by

Mary Loomes

IN after years we shall refer to our last week-end as the time Charles grappled with the paint spray. In our household it will rank with Thurber's " Day the Dam Broke," and other classic situations. It was a harmless-looking object, this paint spray. Old Ledgard had had great success with it at his place. Quite simply it consisted of some flex, a canister containing an electric motor, caterpillar tubing and spray gun in that order. They all fitted into each other and the gun itself screwed into a jar of paint. That was all.

Its mode of working was simple, too—in theory. When the flex was plugged into a light socket a 30-mile-an-hour wind blew fore and aft through the gun. Putting the thumb over the aft opening started the gale in the fore direction—if you were lucky.

Charles rolled up his sleeves and I hovered around in high anticipation. He filled the jar with white undercoating, screwed the top on, straightened out the caterpillar and placed the canister in a strategic position where it would be handy for spraying the woodwork.

" Now ! Plug in," he commanded. " I 'll hold the gun."

I plugged the flex into the light socket. Charles stood like Humphrey Bogart, with the nozzle trained at the ready on an innocent-looking piece of door.

I switched on—nothing happened.

The tension mounted. Charles shook the jar.

" Ledgard says the paint mustn't be too thick. Get me some turps, dear—we 'll dilute it."

It was the last time he called me " dear " that day. I fetched some turps. We diluted. We rescrewed the jar and we switched on.

Nothing happened.

I went along the line, straightening the flex, rejamming the caterpillar. Charles shook the jar up and down.

Nothing happened.

" There 's a black knob here," I said musingly, peering at the canister. " Perhaps it——"

Yes, it did. As I pressed it, a banshee wail arose through the house : a fearful wind screamed in our ears and blew our hair completely on end. We had struggled with the whirlwind for some thirty seconds when I recovered enough breath and wits to yell : " Put your thumb over the hole."

Immediately the tune of the banshee changed from moan to hiss and a fountain of white paint met me full in the eyes and hair.

" Point the ——— thing at the door ! " I spluttered.

" I 'm trying ! " yelled Charles. Then : " Look ! It 's actually spraying ! Jane, it 's wizard ! " And sure enough from the nose of the spray a smooth rosette of tiny droplets appeared magically on the wood.

Ecstatically we watched. Science was wonderful ! But even as we stood and admired, the rosette became a blob and little trickles began to run down, making the thing like a giant amœba.

" It 's all on one spot ! Start at the top and work down ! " I shrieked through the blast.

Charles lifted the gun high, which pulled the caterpillar, which came out with a plop and knocked over the canister. He made a grab for this with his left hand, failed, pointed the spray unconsciously at the window, which became suddenly covered with a white fog.

Simultaneously we bawled " Take your thumb off the hole ! " and " Switch the bally thing off ! " and simultaneously we both did so.

The screaming stopped : the wind subsided. The canister, which had been lying on its side snarling and hissing, ceased its hostility and lay still. Charles picked it up by its handle. It turned a half-somersault and lay down on its other side. The cold war had begun.

" It 's top heavy," said Charles contemptuously. " Look how the thing writhed at us. Ugh ! " and he yanked it to his feet, jammed the caterpillar viciously into its top end, cleaned the window with turps and prepared to start again.

" Now this time," I said tartly, " start where you want to be, under the picture-rail."

Then it struck both of us. The yard-and-a-half of caterpillar tubing provided would not reach the picture-rail.

" We 'll balance it on the steps," said Charles brightly. " I remember now, Ledgard did."

What Ledgard began, inevitably we must follow. I left Charles and the canister perched on the steps and crept away like Mary Martin to wash the man right outa my hair. Behind me the banshee wailed monotonously. Along the entire woodwork of the dining-room crept a slow white cloud. Charles was happy.

Between then and teatime the canister fell over six times ; the caterpillar burst out ten times ; twice the gun refused to spray, and three times I slunk in to find him almost on his head trying to do the skirting-board. Apparently when he tilted the thing downward the paint ran away from the syphon. Once he saw me, and bawled between wind and water : " I 'll have to do this bit with a brush ! " By teatime the little bits to be done with a brush had mounted up. A certain piebald effect was becoming obvious.

The final straw, however, was the door lintel. In a moment of silence I asked : " How will you do the lintel edges ? Won't the paint spray on to the wallpaper ? "

" I 'd thought of that," said Charles carefully. " I 'm going to hold a newspaper alongside the lintel with my free hand to catch the surplus."

" Good idea," I crowed unsuspectingly.

But to work the gadget at all needs all one's brain, sinew and patience ; to hold a newspaper flat against a wall in addition is superhuman. Charles is no superman. As he progressed towards the bottom of the paper the top heeled over slowly and descended paintily on to his head. He tried to forestall this wicked intent ; he took his hand off the paper, let it slide and caught it again lower down. Sometimes he simply didn't catch it ; other times he forgot he was pointing the gun as well. Always he became the Aunt Sally for a little more paint. Minute by minute his temperature rose.

" Come and have tea," I coaxed. " You 'll feel better."

Tea was eaten in grim silence. A thousand wordless things milled round in our heads. Somewhere at the vortex was Ledgard.

" You could," I said diffidently, " stick those newspapers on with drawing-pins."

" I could," he said.

" What will happen when it gets dark ? " I pursued tactlessly. " We haven't an adaptor for the light."

" I shall paint in the dark," he gritted between set teeth, " in the romantic moonlight, no doubt. Or I shall plug into the next room, and when I move away the flex will pull out and the canister will fall off and the caterpillar unplop and I shall jump in the paint, but I shall f-i-n-i-s-h the J-O-B . . . ! "

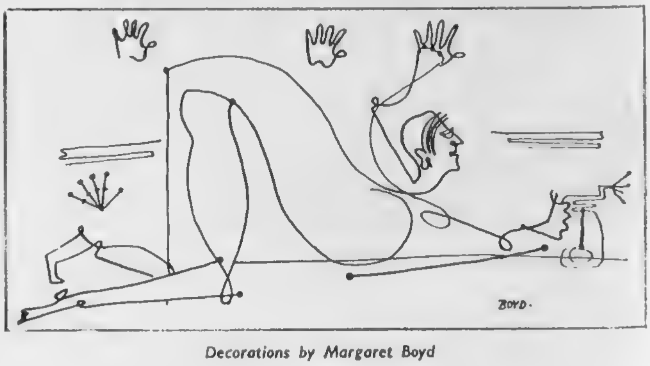
" Quite, dear, quite," I soothed, " but I 've got to go over to Nellie's. Do you think you 'll be all right ? "

" I shall be fine ! Just fine ! " he exulted.

I left him pinning up newspapers. In his eyes was the fanaticism of the near-mad.

When I returned, the house was strangely quiet. The banshee had ceased. The room light blazed merrily. I pushed open the door fearfully. Wreckage was strewn everywhere. Canister, flex, caterpillar, paint and spray gun were in the four corners of the room. Newspaper, criss-crossed with lines of white paint, had descended on the mêlée like a soft cloud. In one corner, under *The Times*, I discerned a faint movement.

It was Charles, painting the skirting-board with a little brush, the look in his eyes like that of a man who has been through a great experience and has at last found peace.



Decorations by Margaret Boyd

Our Portfolio of Spring Fashions

1. ESSENTIALLY FOR EVENING

Elegant simplicity is the keynote of this classic rayon jersey evening gown by Roecliff and Chapman, featuring the jewelled midriff in exquisitely embroidered braiding and bugle beads. The draped cowl neckline front and back held at the shoulders with clasps of the same gold embroidery accentuates the waist—this is in keeping with the Dior line shown in Paris in the new Spring Collections. From the jewelled shoulders two separate floating panels fall to the ground and these can be worn as shown in our photograph, or draped over the arm to give a cloak effect. The skirt is folded over the hips, giving fullness to the front; the back is straight.

This gown is priced at approximately £50, and can be bought at Galeries Lafayette of London or Alexandrine of Nottingham. It is also made in powder-blue and black.

Our Portfolio of Spring Fashions

For springtime "twenty-firsts" and later for summer dancing, *Angele Delanghe's* full-length dress in midnight blue organza, embroidered with white maple leaves. It has an apron front to the skirt, wide shoulder straps and is typical of the present range of simple dance frocks designed for débutantes. From her boutique at Fortnum and Mason's: 85 guineas.

2. LATE DAY OCCASIONS

Young actress Ruth Trouncer, daughter of actor Cecil Trouncer, modelled these dresses, designed for late day occasions, specially for us in the furniture showrooms of Liberty in Regent Street. Ruth has recently been appearing in *The Firstborn* at the Winter Garden Theatre and is due next in Alec Clunes's production of *The Constant Couple*.

Specially photographed for THE SKETCH by W. J. Pilkington.

For supper after the theatre, or for dining at home—*Herbert Sidon's* versatile separates. The blouse of spotted silk taffeta has billowing sleeves and long tight cuffs. Eight yards of black grosgrain mounted on stiff Dior net make the whirling skirt. The blouse costs £20 ; the skirt £30.

1.

Tescan

2.

Selincourt

3.

Deanfield

3. FURS

To add a new fur jacket to your wardrobe this spring is undoubtedly a sensible idea. Here are six chosen for their originality of design, their fine craftsmanship, quality of pelts, beauty of colour and texture and, in some cases, their exceptionally light weight or modest price.

1. A jaunty jacket in *Tescan* leopard lamb with contrasting beaver lamb trimmings. There are deep cavalier cuffs and a large sailor collar. *By Cyril Freedman Furs.* £39 11s.

2. Bronze-coloured jacket in Chinese broadtail, feather weight; cool in summer, warm in winter, just right for spring. It has important turn-back cuffs. By *Selincourt* at Marshall and Snelgrove; Griffin and Spalding of Nottingham. £269.

3. Breath of spring mink bolero which sweeps in a wide curve above the waist into sleeves with small cuffs. By *Deanfield Furs.* £1150 approx.

Our Portfolio of Spring Fashions

4. This silver-blue mink cape jacket has small squared stole fronts; a slightly squared stand-up collar. Separately-worked strands on the shoulder-line give the tiered look. From *National Fur Company*. £995.

5. An important-looking full-backed jacket in phantom beaver with large soft sleeves and a drape collar. By *Deanfield Furs*. £500 approx.

6. Dyed to resemble mink is a jacket of *Tescan* mincella lamb. Deep dolman sleeves narrow and finish just below the elbow. The shoulder-line slopes. By *Admoir Furs*. £37 10s.

4. *National Fur Company*

5. *Deanfield*

6. *Tescan*

Our Portfolio of Spring Fashions

4. SUITS ELEGANT

Right:
This town suit, also shown in black barathea, is by Rensor. It has the new short jacket with cutaway front, long revers fastening with one button at the waist, and cuffed sleeves; the hipline is slightly padded to accentuate the stand-away pockets. The skirt is straight but has an inverted pleat front and back. Four pearl buttons fasten the mandarin neckline of the crisp white piqué gilet shown with the suit; feathers nestle on the white piqué hat, and short white-stitched doeskin gloves complete the ensemble. The suit, in sizes 36-in. to 42-in. hips, is also made in navy blue and steel-grey and is reasonably priced at £13 5s. It can be obtained from D. H. Evans and Bourne and Hollingsworth of London, Cripps of Liverpool, and Garland of Norwich.

Left:
This unusual coat and skirt, exclusive to Marshall and Snelgrove, is in a fine worsted suiting with a fleck effect and can be had in delightful colour combinations of bois de rose, lime/brown and light navy blue. There is hand-stitching round the high collar of the jacket and on the stiffened pockets; the skirt is flared but not too full. Because of the high, three-button fastening, the suit can be worn with or without a blouse and a further advantage is that with a beret or classic felt hat it would be as suitable in the country as it is in town; it is made in sizes 36-40 hips and costs 28½ guineas. The town hat shown here, also from Marshall and Snelgrove, is in fine brown straw and velvet with an aigrette mount and finely-spotted veil. Price 7 guineas.

Left:
This classic model by Simon Massey called "Exhibit" is tailored in the finest black barathea. The new straight skirt has a pencil-slim line which manages to flatter and a slit on the left side to make movement easy; the slit reappears on the sleeve edge; the revers and unusual stiffened pockets are outlined with matching braid ending in stitched sprat-heads. The well-defined waistline and slightly padded basque effect give the new small-waisted look. This suit, smart for any occasion, is also obtainable in navy blue or brown barathea; in pinhead worsted suitings without the braid it can be had in mist-blue, all shades of grey, red, green, fawn, brown and the new, fashionable beige. The price is £25, from Peter Jones and Marshall and Snelgrove of London, Samuels of Manchester, and Nola of Chester.

Right:
A coat and skirt made in the workrooms of Debenham and Freebody in the new oatmeal colour stressed by the Paris collections. Being made of fine hopsack, this suit can be worn in town or country; it will never date, yet has the fashion detail of 1952: pencil-slim skirt, deep roll collar and shaped waist, all beautifully tailored. It can be copied in any other colour and all sizes for 38 guineas. A folded satin waistcoat in the new spring shade of parma violet and an eight-guinea bronze straw hat with a forward movement, upstanding ends and fine veil to cover the face, are worn with it.

Our Portfolio of Spring Fashions

5.
For the Slender Purse:

Bright colours find favour in the new spring rain-wear fashions—crimson, mauve, purple teamed with parrot-green, orange with navy, colours straight from the palette of a poster artist. The new water-proof coats will make a rainy day in April seem like a pageant in sunny Spain.

Alternatively, there is the more conservative group; off-black, or black itself, in a rich new velvety texture with black velvet collar and cap, which can be effectively offset with white accessories, a white linen dickey, crisp white gloves, or a white umbrella.

Above: The girl with the miniature poodle wears *Dannimac's* waterproofed gingham coat in black-and-white puppy-tooth check with a black velvet collar, deep, inset sleeves, and a single row of shining buttons. It costs £2 19s. 8d. and is also available in brown-and-white.

Right: The coat cut on pyramid lines is in *Dannimac's* newest waterproofed fabric, "Doublesheen," which has all the gleam of silk. Colours available are gold, Royal blue, maroon, sea-green, steel-grey and navy. The little stiff-brimmed matching hat has a cowl back and is elasticised to fit any head. The price, which includes the hat, is £4 8s. 8d.

Both items are stocked by most good shops including Book, Sunderland; Bobby's, Bournemouth; Fenwick's, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

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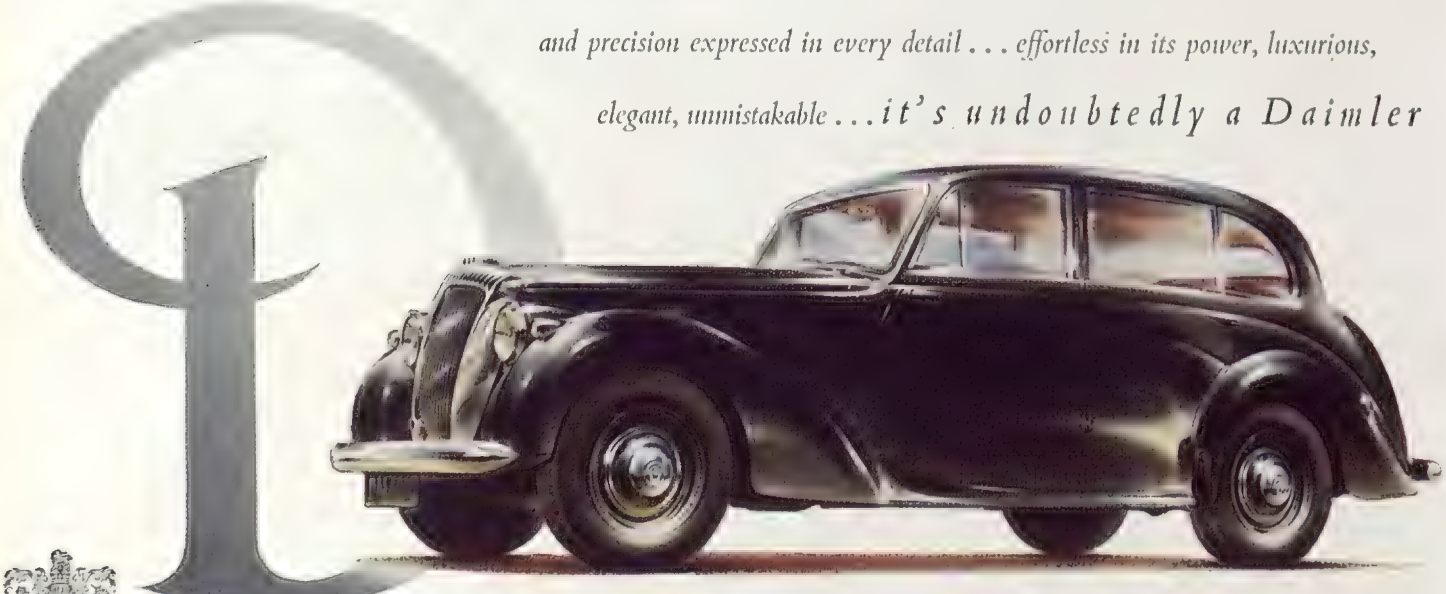

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TALES WITH A STING

THE LOST CLUE

By Lord Gorell

"CLUES in matters of crime," I said negligently, "are usually interesting, often amusing, and sometimes important."

"Always important," corrected my old pal, Detective-Inspector Hugh Simonson, taking another pull at the beer I 'd just ordered for him.

"I suppose so," I answered, doing the same to mine. "Anything either interesting, amusing, or important in this Colgate business? You 're on that, aren't you?"

"I am," he said, and fell silent a moment.

I was not so foolish as to ask him a lot of questions: bad form, you know, and besides, Hugh shuts up like an oyster on his cases to anything the least resembling indecent curiosity. Anyway, the beer wasn't bad, and we 'd time and to spare—at least, he hadn't, but I had. I 'd run into him by lucky chance and was glad to make the most of the meeting: I suppose, in a way, I 'd lured him into the bar for a few minutes to have a drink; a man must relax sometimes.

"Yes," he went on after a while, "I oughtn't to say a word to anyone, I suppose, but, after all, I 've known you a long time, William, and I 'm sure you won't pass it on to a soul."

"I promise," I said.

"Nearly always," explained Hugh, "a criminal makes at least one mistake. If he doesn't, well, I reckon he 's among the few who don't get caught. And in murder that 's very rare."

"Fortunately," I put in. I was interested, and I expect I looked it. Anyway, I gave Hugh all my attention over the top of my mug.

"Yes," he said reflectively, "very rare. In murder cases especially."

"Fellow gets rattled?" I suggested.

"You 've said it, chum," agreed Hugh. "It 's a ticklish business doing a bloke in, you know; and there 's a lot of things to think of and—usually—quickly. It seldom works out exactly as you planned it, and you have to do the best you can on the spur of the moment and when you 're not quite your normal self."

"You speak from experience, Hugh," I said laughing.

"Sort of," he agreed, and grinned rather grimly.

"So there is something in this Colgate affair for you to hang on to, is there?" I asked. I saw he was leading up to something—and Hugh can be interesting when he chooses.

"Yes," he said again, and went silent once more—annoyingly.

I sat mum, of course; and in another minute he went on. "I don't know how much you know, William?" he asked suddenly.

"Only what 's in the papers," I said; "and that 's not much."

"No," he agreed, and finished his beer.

"Have another," I suggested; and he nodded absently.

It was a minute or two before our mugs were refilled: it seemed quite a long time—as it always does when a pal just starts something interesting and stops. But we weren't interrupted, luckily; and presently he resumed. "Just as well," he said, almost as though to himself. "Here 's luck."

"What is?" I asked, though I thought I knew what he meant.

"That so little 's got into the Press," he answered. "Nothing more, as far as I 've seen, than that Norman Colgate was found dead in his flat, head bashed in with his own poker—which was lying there beside him. No finger-prints—it was wiped clean—and no one 'd been noticed going in or out. In fact, no obvious clues at all."

"That 's all I 've seen," I said.

"You knew him, didn't you, William?" Hugh asked.

"Slightly," I said. "Hadn't seen him for some time. His ways and mine didn't match, you know."

"No: he was a poisonous old chap, by all accounts," Hugh agreed. "Money-lender and all that: blackmailer, too, I shouldn't wonder. Sort of man heaps of fellows 'd want to do in—the question is, who didn't stop at wanting?"

"That, I suppose, is the question," I agreed. "And you say 'no clues at all.'"

"I didn't. That 's what the papers say: that 's what we told them. As a matter of fact, William, there is one clue—" and Hugh broke off, maddeningly.

However, I knew better than to shut him up with questions: I sat mum, as before, sipping my beer and looking, well, just interested.

"I 've got it here," he said at last: and slowly he drew out his pocket-book. With great care he took out of it a crumpled little slip of paper, placed between two bits of tissue-paper—for finger-prints' sake, I suppose—and laid it down lightly on the little bar-parlour table.

"What the blazes is that?" I asked: I was keenly interested, of course, even surprised.

"It was clenched in his fist," he explained. "He must have been holding it there—perhaps to refresh his memory, perhaps to taunt his visitor, perhaps—who knows?"

"I 'm sure I don't," I put in, staring at it.

"I didn't suppose you did," Hugh retorted sardonically. "But I 'll get to know. He had this out——"

"'Had it out,'" I repeated, still staring at it intently. "What does that mean?"

"It was Colgate's way of indexing his loans," Hugh explained. "Oh, I 've found out a few things already, you know. He kept an index on separate little slips of paper, one for each client, a number for each one and the sum owed him. Names, addresses, and all details he reserved for his big ledger. That 's gone, by the way: so 's the index: the murderer knew a thing or two. But he missed out on this. Read it: '217—£1,800.' That says a jugful, William."

"How so?" said I doubtfully. "Who 's No. 217? This doesn't seem to me to tell you that, which is what matters, isn't it?"

"It may not seem to," observed Hugh; "but it does—at least it will. You see," and he lowered his voice very significantly, "I got it out of young Davidson, Colgate's clerk. Colgate—mind you, William, this is absolutely to go no further——"

"It won't," I promised him.

"—Colgate made every client—or, should I say, victim?—initial his own slip as a formal admission of debt."

I sniffed rather scornfully. "I don't see any initials on this particular slip, anyway," I said.

"You wouldn't," Hugh rejoined. "He made them use invisible ink so as to keep a hold over them in secret, as it were."

"Rot," said I emphatically. "They wouldn't."

"Fellows wanting money badly 'll do anything," he answered.

"I see," I said slowly. "And so——?"

"And so all I 've to do now is to get this slip treated by our expert; it 'll tell me what I want most to know. I was on my way when I bumped into you. I must be off in a minute."

"I see," I said again. "It 's—it 's interesting."

"Very," he responded. "It 's the end of the string, William."

"What 's that?" I asked.

"My job," he explained, "is just like tackling a tangled ball of string. Get hold of an end and you can straighten it out—in time."

I continued to stare at the slip, puzzling: I didn't quite know what to say. And at that moment, as chance would have it, a fat old codger named Mullins opened the door and poked his head in. There was a bit of a breeze on outside, and the window was open. The next second one of the bits of tissue-paper whirled up in the draught and fluttered out.

"Shut that door, curse and confound you!" roared Hugh, spinning round; and old Mullins, abashed, stared a second, gulped, and then did as he was told. The very act of banging the door shut made the other bit of tissue-paper fly up. Hugh grabbed it just as it was going out of the window after the first bit. Then he spun back to the table, and his language was something to listen to.

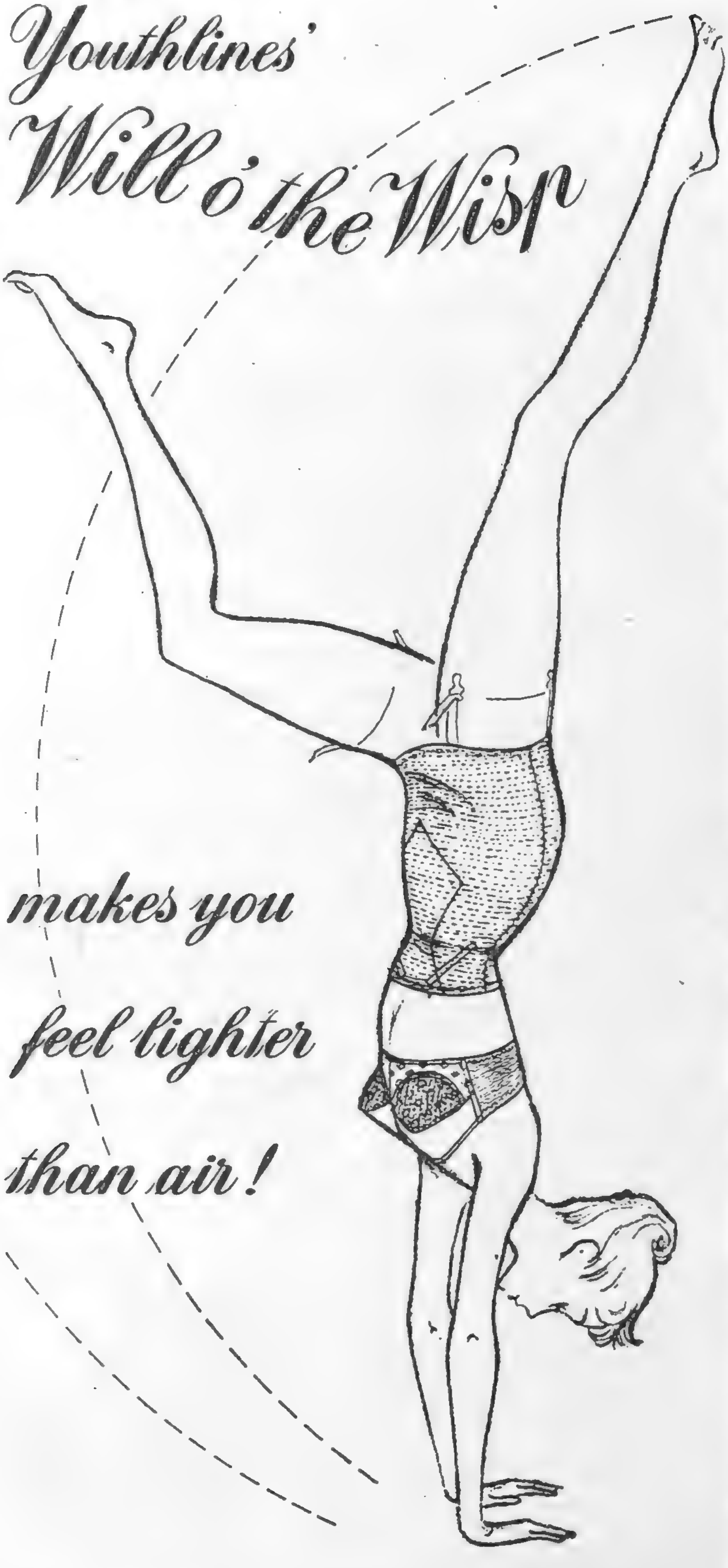
"Hell's bells!" he ended. "The slip 's gone! There 'll be no clue, nothing by way of proof, nothing at all! The case is wrecked and I 'm sunk!"

"It blew out of the window too," I said. "I tried to catch it, but——"

Hugh was out of the room before I 'd finished and I heard him tear out into the street, swearing like a dozen devils as he went.

I had the slip out of my pocket in a split second, tore it to bits and swallowed every one. They weren't tasty, but I 've enjoyed few meals more.

Youthlines' Will o' the Wisp



makes you feel lighter than air!

'Will-o'-the-Wisp' really is the lightest thing you'll ever set eyes on! It's an exciting new Youthline, shaped to come just above the waist, and feels like the merest wisp. That's because it's made with Youthline genius from silky-fine American "Nylon Power-Net," famous in the States for strength and stretch and lightness. We think it's wonderful . . . but words fail us . . . you'll *have* to see it for yourself!

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The Courtaulds-Sanderson Collection of Ancestral Fabrics is now on view at Sanderson's showrooms, 52/53 Berners Street, London, W.1. It is also being shown in the U.S.A. and Sweden by arrangement with F. SCHUMACHER & CO., NEW YORK, and ERIC EWERS A B, STOCKHOLM.

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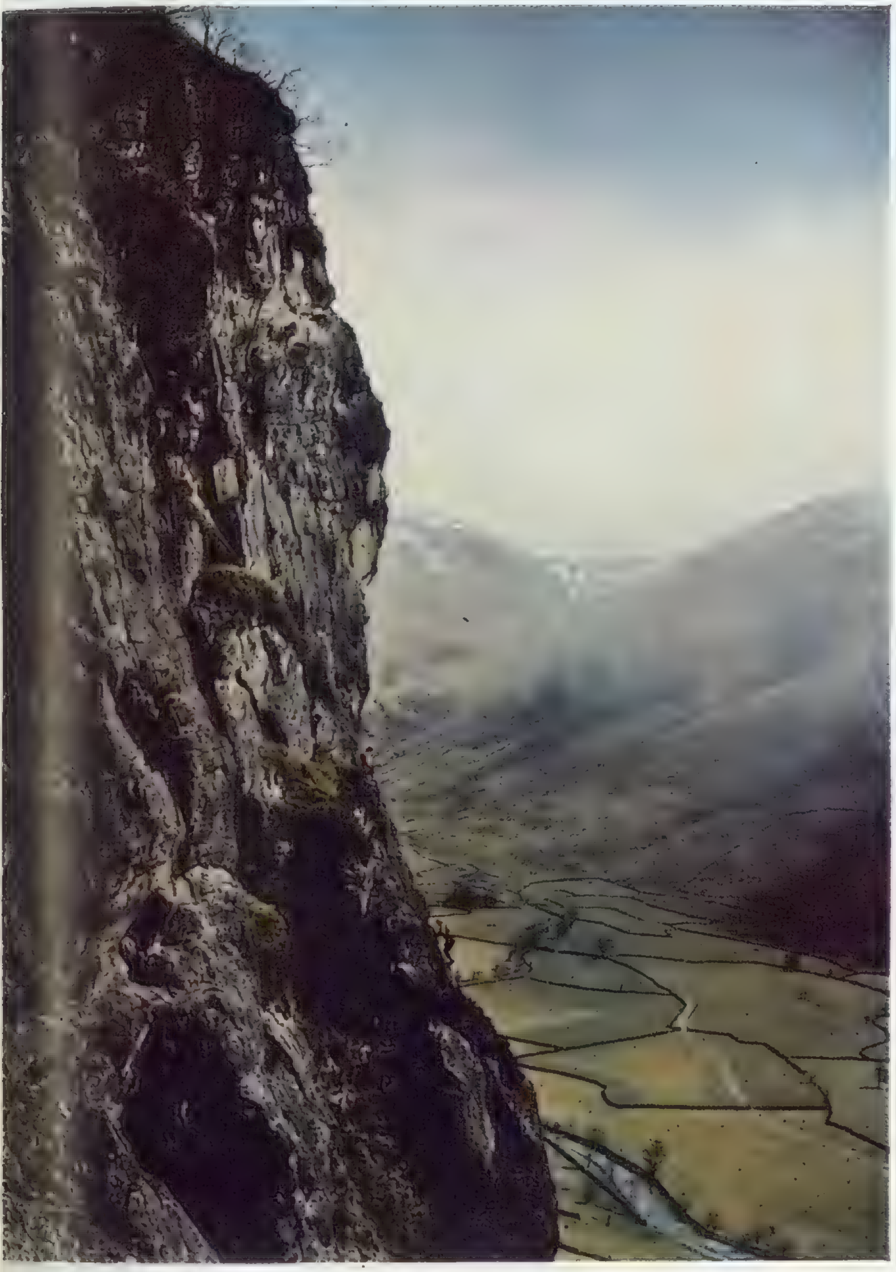

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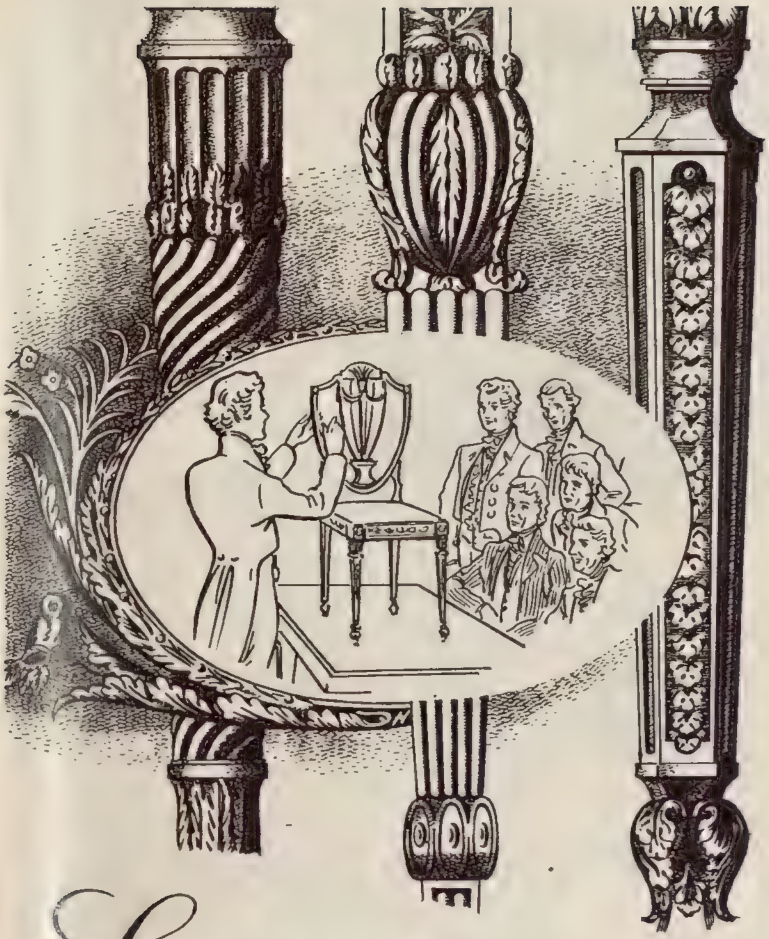

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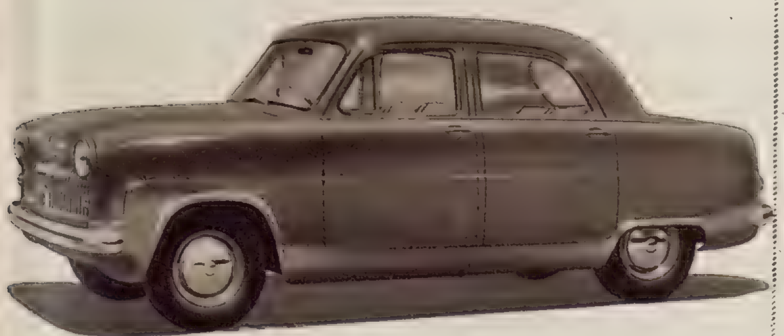

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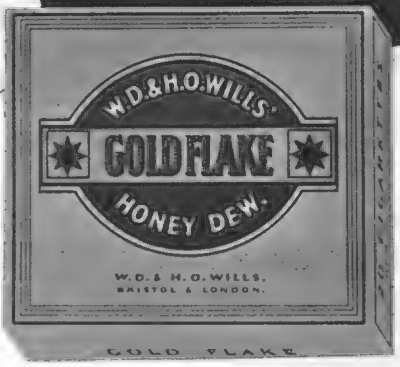

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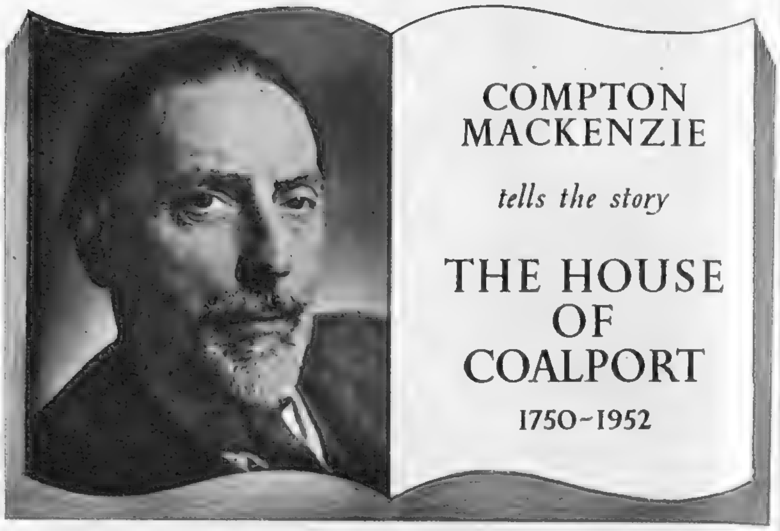

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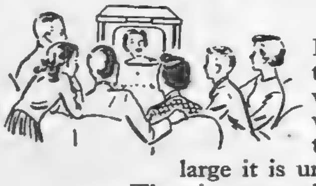

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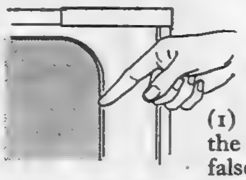

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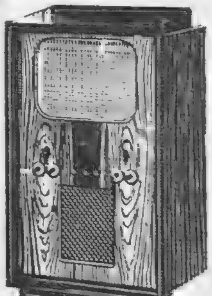

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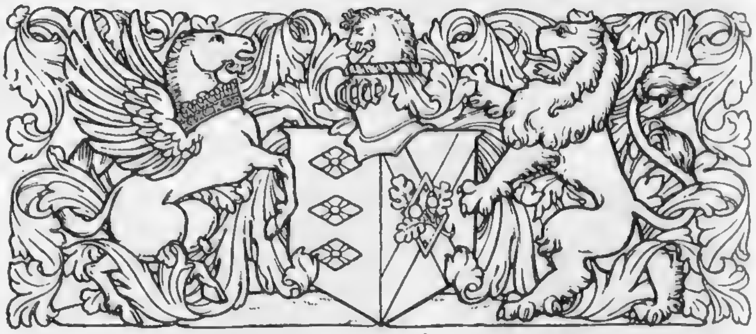

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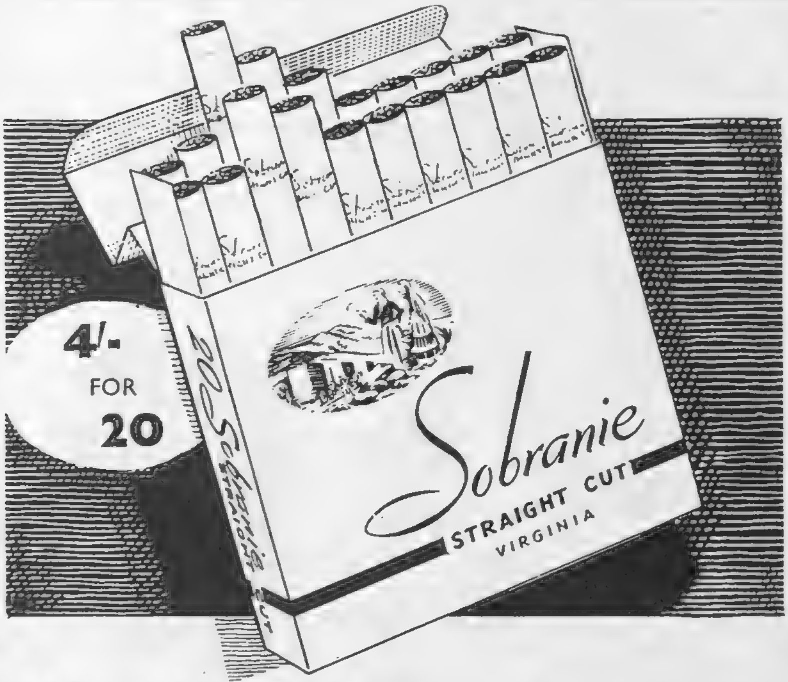

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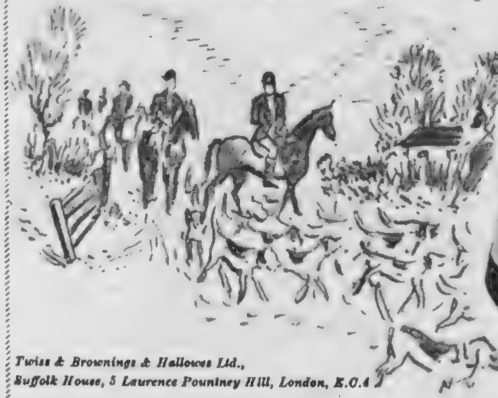

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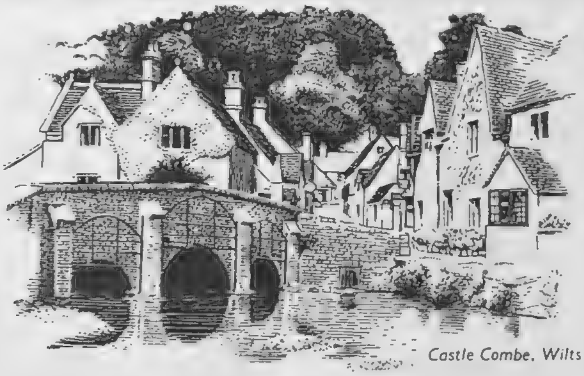

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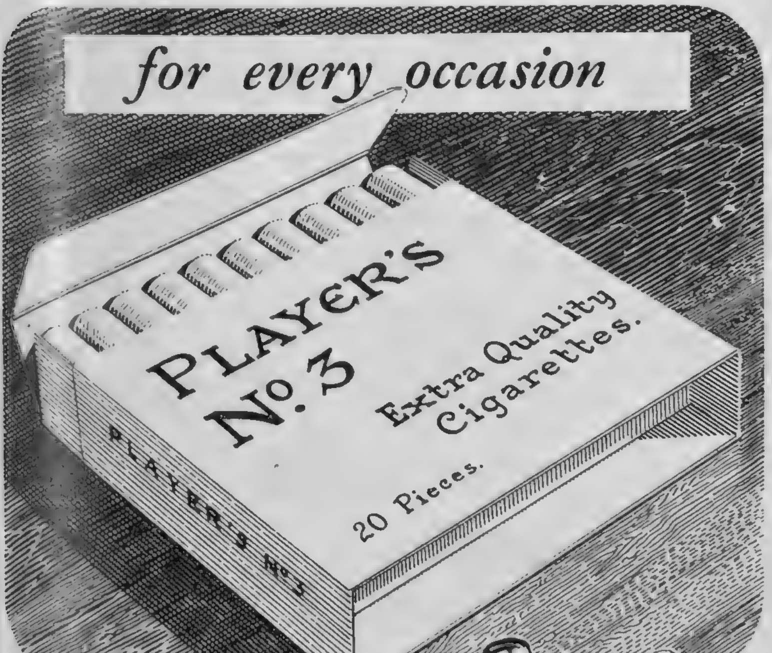

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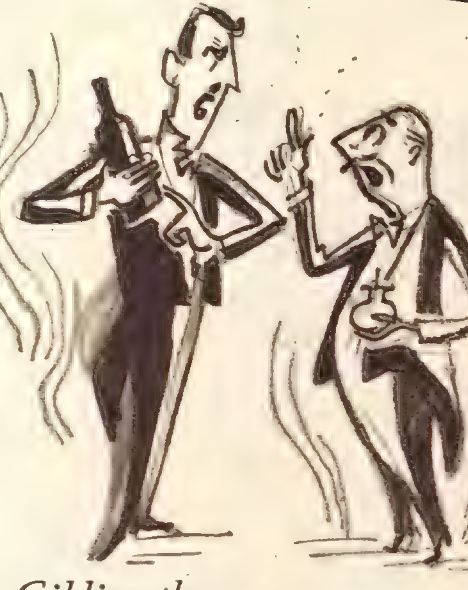

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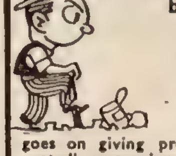

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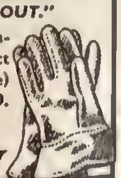

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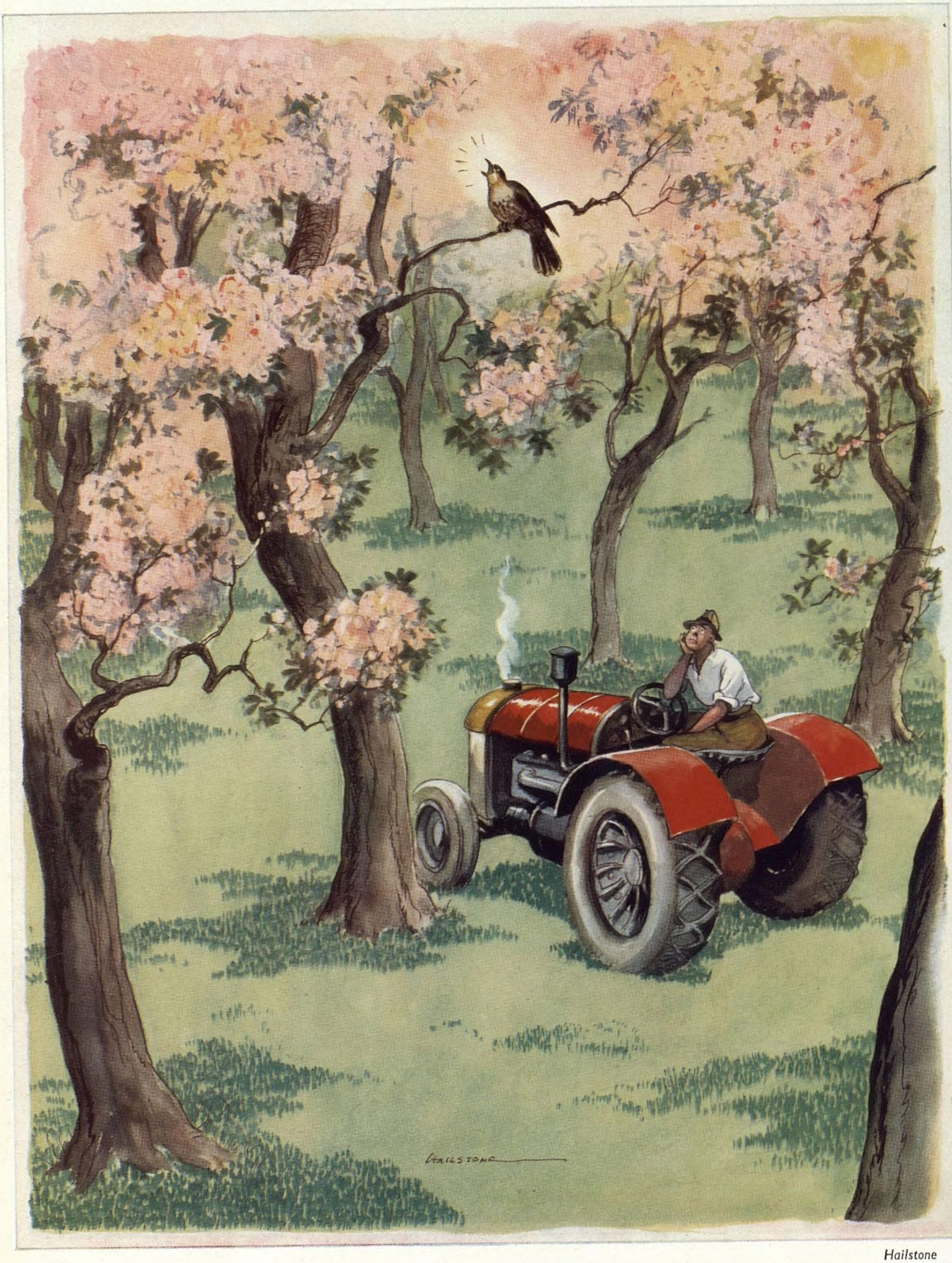

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"... the labouring wight
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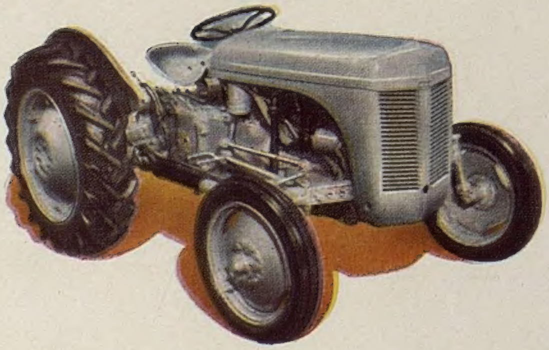

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